

**Writing and Muslim Identity: Representations of Islam in
German and English Transcultural Literature, 1990-2006**

Frauke Matthes

Doctor of Philosophy
The University of Edinburgh
2007



Abstract

This PhD thesis examines the interaction between travel, translation, and gender in relation to Islam in German and English transcultural literature. As the non-Islamic world seems to be defining itself increasingly in contrast with the Islamic world, a literary exploration of these issues, which have virtually been ignored by academic scholarship, will shed new light on the interactions between the Muslim world and 'the West'.

The aim is to explore how German- and English-language authors, Muslim and non-Muslim, approach notions of physical and metaphorical movement, (cultural) translation (the means of communicating between cultures, languages and religions, and between a migrant's/traveller's heritage and present), and the significance of gender constructions in contemporary fictional and semi-fictional writing of travel and migration. In my comparative reading of the selected texts, which is guided by postcolonial criticism, I evaluate the similarities and differences between German and English transcultural writing, whilst paying particular attention to the role of Islam in these texts.

The first two chapters focus on movement. In the first chapter on migration writing (Emine Sevgi Özdamar and Monica Ali), I analyse what happens when Islam 'moves'. I ask how the writers approach first-generation Muslim migration and constructions of 'home', primarily from their female protagonists' point of view. The second chapter on pilgrimage and hajj (V.S. Naipaul and Ilija Trojanow) looks into the idea of travelling to Islam, to its 'heart' (Mecca and Medina) as well as to its peripheries (non-Arab Muslim countries), and the textualization of the journeys. The emphasis of the subsequent two chapters then shifts to gender issues of the generation that 'has arrived' (post-migrants). The third chapter is an examination of the perceptions of the relationship between Islam, 'difference', and masculinity among young male Muslims (in texts by Feridun Zaimoğlu and Hanif Kureishi). Chapter 4 explores the interaction between language, gender, and Islam (in the work of Özdamar, Zaimoğlu, and Leila Aboulela). As this chapter considers female perspectives from the 'margins of society', it connects back to Chapter 1.

I also address the question of whether writing about Islam reveals a shift in the Western cultural paradigm. An exploration of the self-definition of Muslim writers in relation to their audience and an outlook to recently published German and English transcultural literature conclude the thesis.

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Preface

This thesis uses the MHRA system of documentation.

I italicize frequently mentioned concepts such as *Imaginary Homelands* or the *in-between* without specific reference to their authors. The sources of these concepts become obvious in the introduction.

Expressions such as 'the West', 'the Orient', or 'the Other' are not indicated with scare quotes to ensure the readability of the text. However, the author is aware of the problematic of such concepts, and wishes to express her distance to the literal use of these terms and dichotomies such as 'West' – 'Other'. The same holds true for originally pejorative terms such as '*Kanake*', which Zaimoğlu re-appropriates for his work. They are used in his understanding only. Already italicized foreign-language words referred to as terms are also scare-quoted.

All foreign-language words not commonly used in English are italicized. For Arabic words, I use the transliteration system suggested by the *International Journal for Middle East Studies*, yet preserve the original transliteration in quotations. In titles and quotations, I follow the original, that is, mainly Germanized or Anglicized spelling of Turkish names. In my own writing, however, I apply the original Turkish spelling.

Unless otherwise stated, translations from the German provided are mine. If published translations of texts exist, I use them. I quote from primary literature and long passages from secondary material in German in the main text and provide the relevant English translations in footnotes. Short quotations are given in English translation in the main text in order to maintain its readability, with the German original in footnotes. The original German from short quotations is given in the main text (with English translations in footnotes) only, if it is peculiar.

Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to all who have helped me to see this project to fruition. My principal debt is to Sarah Colvin who has been an encouraging, challenging, and kind supervisor, and from whose recommendations and suggestions I have benefited greatly. Thank you for your support and your commitment to this project. My assistant supervisors, Carole Hillenbrand, Aedín Ní Loingsigh, Elisabeth Kendall, and Mary Cosgrove gave valuable feedback and have been helpful throughout. I appreciate your willingness to give of your time so freely. I am grateful to all at the University of Edinburgh who have helped me in my work, foremost the German Section and the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies in whose friendly and warm atmosphere I have always felt supported and encouraged.

I would like to acknowledge the Arts and Humanities Research Council for their support.

Furthermore, I found the conferences 'Betwixt and Between: Place and Cultural Translation' (Queen's University Belfast; April 2005) and 'German Encounters with Islam' (NUI, Maynooth; March 2007) particularly inspiring for my work. Michael Heß at the Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung Berlin took the time to speak to me about research in my field.

The list of colleagues and friends who read, or listened to, parts of this thesis can only be incomplete. I would therefore like to thank all of those in Edinburgh, Leipzig, and various other places, whose comments influenced my work and with whom I had fruitful discussions. I thank you for your friendship which made much of my research enjoyable. I should, nevertheless, mention with gratitude Bridget Wilson for her continuous help with translations and for her interest right from the beginning of this project.

Special thanks to Ilija Trojanow, who willingly met me in Glasgow for an interview. Speaking to him made this project more real.

Above all, I thank my parents who have always believed in me and encouraged me to fulfil my potential. Thank you for all your love and continuous support.

Declaration

I herewith declare that this thesis

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has been composed by the myself and is completely my own work. I have not used any other material and aids than the ones mentioned. The work has not been submitted to any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Edinburgh, 31 August 2007

'Language may be one of many elements that allow us to make sense of things, of ourselves [...] [, and] making sense of ourselves is what produces identity.'

– Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation' –

Introduction

Islam and Transcultural Literature

Encounters between cultures are regarded as part of the ‘human condition’ in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: the interaction – often called ‘clashing’ – of diverse cultural heritages and current cultural trends, languages and religions have shaped (and continue to shape) people’s perceptions of themselves and the Other. Graham Huggan suggests that we live in an ‘age of fragmentation’ and that cosmopolitanism today is a widespread experience.¹ This development is reflected in travel and migratory movements. In this thesis I shall call the continuing acts of making sense of what happens on those journeys, between known and unfamiliar places, ‘translation processes’.

Islam has been allocated a ‘special’ role in the discourses of cultural encounters: this religion and its extremist forms have become a widely debated topic over the last years, increasingly since the suicide attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York City and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, on 11 September 2001, which was organized by the Islamist terror network al-Qaida (‘9/11’). The youngest of the monotheistic religions seems to have been demonized as an object of counter-identification for the West. This has a long history: tensions between East and West

¹ Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 9 and p. 10.

have coloured Western thought since the rise of the Ottoman and Holy Roman Empires. The East-West encounter serves cultural identification, and there is a growing focus on something called 'Islamic fundamentalism'.² As an Other, a worldwide 'threat to Western civilization',³ this is understood to be something whose extreme forms, which are often personified by young radical Muslims, must be fought. It has been discussed extensively in the media in connection with Western societal and political concerns. The West's, or, more specifically in the context of this thesis, Britain's and Germany's, crucial role in constructing a negative perception of Islam as a violent religion is often ignored. These countries' histories (British imperialism and its subsequent migration processes, and the story of German *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers)) have significantly contributed to the tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims.⁴ The debates in Britain and Germany primarily focus on the domestic results of historical developments such as multiculturalism, and on immigration and its 'problems' regarding, for instance, citizenship, education, and knowledge of the language of the migrants' new country of abode. However, on the Muslim side, there is an increasing awareness of the political dimension of being 'different'.⁵ This is reflected in, for example, a growing (literary) outspokenness.

² John L. Esposito dismisses the term 'fundamentalism'. He regards "'fundamentalism" as too laden with Christian presuppositions and Western stereotypes, as well as implying a monolithic threat that does not exist; more fitting general terms are "Islamic revivalism" or "Islamic activism", which are less value-laden and have roots within the Islamic tradition. In recent years, the terms "political Islam" and "Islamism" have become more common usage. Islam possesses a long tradition of revival (*tajdid*) and reform (*islah*) which includes notions of political and social activism dating from the early Islamic centuries to the present day. Thus I prefer to speak of Islamic revivalism and Islamic activism rather than of Islamic fundamentalism.' (John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, 3rd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999 [1992]), p. 6).

³ Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, fully rev. edn with a new Introduction (London: Vintage, 1997 [1981]), p. 144. Said wrote this in 1981, shortly after the Iranian Revolution, when Islam became a largely negative news item.

⁴ *Gastarbeiter* (primarily male) were recruited by the German state from Southern Europe and Turkey in the 1960s to meet the shortages on the labour market after the construction of the Berlin Wall, when East German workers could no longer work in West Germany. They were meant to stay for a short time only (hence the noun '*Gast*' ('guest') in the compound). With increasing unemployment as a result of European recession, the then German chancellor Willy Brandt issued the *Anwerbestopp* (recruitment stop) to end the influx of foreign labour. However, many *Gastarbeiter* stayed on and even brought their families to Germany for an economically better future. See James Helicke, 'Turks in Germany: Muslim Identity "Between" States', in *Muslim Minorities in the West: Visible and Invisible*, ed. by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane I. Smith (Walnut Creek, CL: AltaMira, 2002), pp. 175-191 (pp. 179-80).

⁵ Ruvani Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi, Writers and Their Work* (Travistock: Northcote House in association with the British Council, 2002), p. 2.

Many Muslims have developed a 'refusal to remain invisible'⁶ – and writing literature is part of that refusal.

(1)

Since its beginnings, Islam has been part of Western thought, literature, and culture. As the youngest of the 'three religions of the book', Christians soon regarded as an opposition, even a threat, to their religion. Politically and historically this can be traced back to the Muslim conquests and the Crusades, and later to the tensions between the Holy Roman and the Ottoman Empires. According to Rana Kabbani, who has done extensive scholarship on the Orient's image in the West, 'Islam was seen as a negation of Christianity; Muhammad as an imposter, an evil sensualist, an Antichrist in alliance with the Devil. The Islamic world was seen as Anti-Europe (Kiernan), and was held in suspicion as such.'⁷ This suspicion was fostered by comparisons between Christianity and Islam, and their respective values, which still today are the basis for fundamental misunderstandings. Ziauddin Sardar connects them to the Reformation as the origin of secularization in the West. Secularity, he points out, is also a 'form of religion'.⁸ Christianity often ignores that 'Islam, while a source of self-definition, is more of an ethnocultural qualification than a theological weltanschauung'.⁹ The assumption is made that Islam is fundamentally different and barely understandable. As an Other, Islam soon turned into an 'idea Islam' with a focus on its negative aspects. The West often dismisses it as a multi-faceted religion which has been influenced by the various countries' cultures where it is lived.¹⁰ This reduction has been part of the knowledge-power-control mechanism described by Edward W. Said in *Orientalism*.

⁶ Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain: Religion, Politics and Identity Among British Muslims: Bradford in the 1990s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), p. 24.

⁷ Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myth of Orient*, rev. and expanded edn (London: Pandora, 1994 [1986]), p. 5.

⁸ Ziauddin Sardar, *Desperately Seeking Paradise: Journey of a Sceptical Muslim* (London: Granta, 2004 [2005 printing]), p. 248 and p. 255.

⁹ Amin Malak, *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), p. 68.

¹⁰ Cf. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, repr. with a new Afterword (London: Penguin, 1995 [1978]), p. 5.

The power-control mechanism is strongly linked to imperial interests in Muslim areas such as the Middle East and North Africa. Getting to know the Orient was a political interest: the colonizers could then dominate and control it, and keep it weak. This contributed to the creation of an Orient that sprang entirely out of the imperialists' mind. As Said explains: 'Knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense *creates* the Orient, the Oriental, and his world.'¹¹ Whilst conquering forces were working in the colonies, Orientalist scholarship 'at home', such as the learning of languages, scholarship on history and politics, was simultaneously fostered. Gathering knowledge about the Orient was to contribute to the imperial mission.

Similarly, Islam has been part of an ongoing European literary interest:¹² the Orient, by which I mean not exclusively Muslim countries, has always triggered desires and fascination in artists and writers. With the beginning of Christianity, the Orient, or rather The Holy Land, became a place of Christian pilgrimage, which was textualized in, for example, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678).¹³ Later, a more specific interest in Islam came to the fore: for example, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's play *Nathan der Weise* (*Nathan the Wise*) (1779) is a plea for religious tolerance between the three 'religions of the book', Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, expressed mainly in the play's 'Ringparabel' ('ring parable').¹⁴ Johann Wolfgang Goethe showed the Persian poet Hafiz's influence on some of his lyrical poems collected in the *West-östlicher Divan* (*West-Eastern Divan*) (1819). There, Goethe also developed his translation theory: 'der Übersetzer, der sich fest an sein Original anschließt, gibt mehr oder weniger die Originalität seiner Nation auf, und so entsteht ein Drittes, wozu der Geschmack der Menge sich erst heranbilden muß.'¹⁵ Critics

¹¹ Ibid., p. 41 and p. 40 (original emphasis).

¹² Only few examples of literature dealing with the Orient or the Muslim world shall illustrate that the literary interest in Islam is going back many centuries. I could have included many more titles, which would, however, have gone beyond the scope of this introduction. More titles will be mentioned throughout the thesis where appropriate.

¹³ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Nelson's Royal Classics (Nashville: Nelson, 1999; originally publ. as *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World, to That Which Is to Come: Delivered Under the Similitude of a Dream*, 1678).

¹⁴ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan der Weise: Ein dramatisches Gedicht, in fünf Aufzügen*, in *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*, ed. by Wilfried Barner and others (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993), ix: *Werke 1778-1780*, ed. by Klaus Bohnen and Arno Schilson, Bibliothek Deutscher Klassiker, 94, pp. 483-666.

¹⁵ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens*, Münchner Ausgabe, ed. by Karl Richter and others (Munich: Hanser, 1998), xli.1.iii: *West-östlicher Divan*, ed. by Karl

therefore often regard the *West-östlicher Divan* as one of the first literary works that addresses notions of intercultural understanding.¹⁶

Todd Kontje points out that

the very lack of a unified nation-state and the absence of empire contributed to the development of a peculiarly German Orientalism. German writers oscillated between identifying their country with the rest of Europe against the Orient and allying themselves with selected parts of the East against the West.¹⁷

In contrast to British and other European colonizers, German Orientalists had a primarily intellectual interest in the Orient which was also meant to signify that Germany 'belonged to modern European civilization'.¹⁸ In this context, a number of Romantics openly displayed their admiration for India. For Friedrich Schlegel, for instance, the Orient was the purest form of Romanticism, which he outlined in *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier (On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians)* (1808):¹⁹ he 'placed the Orient and the West in a functional relationship with each other', which resulted in the confirmation of their identities in the encounter.²⁰

The Orient was also a place for (sexual) pleasure because of its supposed lascivious sensuality.²¹ Gustave Flaubert's and Gérard de Nerval's experiences in Egypt and the texts based on them (in Flaubert's *Lettres d'Orient* (1849-1851) and Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* (1851)) can be seen in this light.²²

Richter in cooperation with Katharina Mommsen and Peter Ludwig, p. 264 (in sec. 'Besserem Verständniss', pp. 129-282): 'the translator who follows an original closely more or less gives up the originality of his nation, and thus a third thing is created which the crowd yet have to develop a taste for'.

¹⁶ Michael Hofmann, *Interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft: Eine Einführung*, UTB, 2839 (Paderborn: Fink, 2006), pp. 80-81.

¹⁷ Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004), pp. 2-3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁹ Friedrich Schlegel, *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier: Ein Beitrag zur Begründung der Altertumskunde von Friedrich Schlegel: Nebst metrischen Uebersetzungen indischer Gedichte* (Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer, 1808; repr. in *History of Linguistics: 18th and 19th Century German Linguistics*, 8 vols, with a new Introduction by Chris Hutton (London: Routledge and Thoemmes, 1995)).

²⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 137.

²¹ *Ibid.*, for example, p. 182.

²² Gustave Flaubert, *Lettres d'Orient*, Foreword by Pierre Bergouieux, Collection 'de mémoire' (Bordeaux: L'Horizon chimérique, 1990; first publ. in *Correspondance*, 1, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1973)); Gérard de Nerval, *Voyage en Orient*, 2 vols, ed. by Michel Jeanneret (Paris: Ganier-Flammarion, 1980; first publ. Paris: Carpentier, 1851).

However the Orient was perceived, it tended to be a 'closed system', fixed in time and place, and supposed to have had its glorious period already. This 'textual attitude' has been persistent until now, and a growing number of Western readers have developed an (Orientalist) interest in getting to know Islam, which is also reflected on the literary market. It has its greatest expression in travel writing.²³ Towards the end of the twentieth century, more reflective travel writing about the Middle East has started to be published, for example Jonathan Raban's *Arabia Through the Looking Glass* (1979).²⁴

Increasing Muslim migration to Europe has resulted in a number of texts reflecting on Islam from the 'inside'. Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) is the prime example.²⁵ This thesis will look into representations of Islam in German- and English-language writing of the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century. I have chosen texts primarily by Muslim authors in order to give a differentiated view on this religion.

After imperialism, in the post-colonial era, many Muslims became migrants to their former colonizing countries to work and to establish an economically better life. This had implications on the development of Islam as a religion and culture: Islam moved to Europe, and could not be ignored. German and British (and other European) Muslim identities have since been established.²⁶ This raises questions regarding how Islam is lived in a 'foreign' environment: the West tends to perceive religion as a private matter. However, Islam is also specifically 'a social event', an experience of the community of believers, the *umma*.²⁷ In this sense, the question of how Islam can be identified – as a culture, way of living, or merely as a belief system – in non-Muslim surroundings determines the interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims, and Islam's further development.

In recent years, there has been an Islamic revival in both the West and in Muslim countries such as Turkey. There seems to be a desire to return to religious

²³ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 70 and p. 108; p. 93; see p. 127.

²⁴ Jonathan Raban, *Arabia Through the Looking Glass* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1980 [1979]).

²⁵ Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Vintage, 1998 [1988]).

²⁶ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, p. 7. Unless otherwise stated, I use 'English' to refer to the English language and 'British' to refer to the country Great Britain. I am aware of the differences between these terms, particularly in relation to notions of identity among migrants to Britain, but it would go beyond the scope of this thesis to explore this issue fully.

²⁷ Cf. Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Wir und die Anderen*, Edition Zweite Moderne (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2004), p. 30.

roots. In this thesis that particularly concerns the youngest generation of former migrants. Ron Geaves reads this 'as a response to colonial and post-colonial discourse and conditions', and as a way of participating in Western society.²⁸ Islamic revivalism is also partly a response to what Muslims have to face in the non-Muslim world: for instance, prejudices against Islam as a 'fundamentalist', patriarchal, and sexist religion, which are part and parcel of the Western image of Muslims and Muslim societies, or violent outbreaks such as 'Paki-bashing' as a reaction against 'Islam as threat' (as triggered by, for example, the 'Rushdie affair', the worldwide reactions to the fatwa (religious edict), which called for his death, issued by Iran's Supreme Leader Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini after the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, or '9/11'). All this is bound to undermine successful communication between Muslims and non-Muslims.²⁹ The question is whether there is any genuine cultural exchange between Islam and the West. Muslims have been living in Western cities for decades. They have brought their religion, cultures, and languages with them, and have influenced British and German society. Amin Malak points out that 'Islam, both as faith and a civilization, has, in aggregate, acquired a global, cross-cultural reach that embraces diversities of languages, races, ethnicities, and regions'.³⁰ Today, this also holds true in the Western world. All these issues are also addressed in contemporary literature and will be considered in my reading of the selected texts.

This thesis asks: is an 'idea Islam' created in contemporary writing, and is Islam peculiarly 'powerful' in that respect? This question necessitates the consideration of societal, political, historical, and cultural developments in the light of current perceptions of Islam and the Muslim world in contemporary fictional and semi-fictional writing by German- and English-language authors, Muslim and non-Muslim.

A comparison between Germany and Britain will give access to a differentiated understanding of perceptions of Islam in Europe. Firstly, the different

²⁸ Ron Geaves, 'Who Defines Moderate Islam "Post"-September 11?', in *Islam and the West Post 9/11*, ed. by Ron Geaves and others (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 62-74 (p. 71).

²⁹ For an analysis of the political dimension of Islam, which is at the centre of the attention of Western media, see Basam Tibi, *Islam Between Culture and Politics*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan in association with The Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 2005 [2001]).

³⁰ Malak, *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English*, p. 5.

conditions for Muslim migration suggest different attitudes towards Muslims in these two cultures: in Britain (as in other European countries with an imperial history such as France), Muslim migration was primarily the result of imperialism, whereas in Germany, which never had colonies in the Muslim world and foremost pursued an intellectual interest in Islam, Muslim migration was an entirely economic migration (the *Gastarbeiter* movement). In that way, Islam has been in the public eye for longer in Britain than in Germany. Furthermore, Germany tends to look at how Britain deals with 'immigration problems' rather than, for example, to France with its large Muslim population, as Britain seems to be more 'successful' in that respect. The differences in Muslim immigration as well as the cultural and historical distinctions which differentiate on the one hand a largely rural Turkish immigrant population in Germany and on the other an immigrant population of mainly Punjabi and Bengali derivation in Britain might have an effect on the literary representations of Islam in these countries.

Secondly, I suggest that these migration processes and the visibility or invisibility of Muslims have had effects on the politics of the literary market.³¹ Germany seems to produce migrant or what I call 'transcultural literature' (to be explained below) that, at least until recently, has mainly found attention in academia. With its largely innovative, 'modern' styles and language, which is part of the reason why German works of transcultural literature often receive literary prizes, it has been less accessible to the wider reading public than, for example, more broadly received films with multicultural subject matters. Yet the latter's commercial success has also resulted in greater attention of German transcultural literature. In Britain, transcultural writing has been hugely popular (as have its translations into German³²). Multiculturalism has been visible longer in Britain than in Germany. A popular interest in the Other stems in large part from economic success and the resulting tourism, but also from the longer visibility and thus awareness of the Other

³¹ I would like to thank Dr Peter Davies (University of Edinburgh) for suggesting to think about the politics of the literary market as part of my comparative strategy.

³² Other European transcultural writing in German translation, for example from France, has not been as successful as English transcultural writing. In Britain, German transcultural writing in translation (such as Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Life is a Caranvanseirai*) has not received major public attention. (I received this information from the editor of the Middlesex University World Literature Series, Peter Bush, during a conversation at the conference 'Betwixt and Between: Place and Cultural Translation' at Queen's University, Belfast (April 2005).)

within Britain than within Germany. Furthermore, its style tends to be less innovative than German transcultural writing which ensures its accessibility to the reading mainstream. These differences in the literary systems, which also often influence the writers' choice of genre (mainly fiction in Britain, and more semi- or non-fictional writing in Germany) have had a great impact on the popularity of this literature and other media such as television and film. By examining possible German and British ways of dealing with Islam in transcultural writing and by concluding with the question whether they might have an influence on its reception in both countries, we will learn more about European understandings of Islam which are based on different historical developments and textual realizations.

(2)

This thesis focuses on travel as a mode of encountering cultures. I base my definition of travel on the significance of travelling in Islam: it is part of a learning process and involves the seeking of knowledge. Although (in contrast to travel as a privileged form of movement) migration is not voluntary when it is caused by economic or political necessity, it too always involves a learning process – about oneself as well as the new country. I read both travel and migration as translation processes within and between cultures. Both involve movement, literally between countries, yet also (particularly in the case of migration) metaphorically between cultures, languages, and religions. Iain Chambers differentiates between travel and migration as follows:

travel implies movement between fixed positions, a site of departure, a point of arrival, the knowledge of an identity. It also intimates an eventual return, a potential homecoming. Migrancy, on the contrary, involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in languages, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation. Always in transit, the promise of a homecoming – completing the story, domesticating the detour – becomes an impossibility. History gives way to histories, as the West gives way to the world.³³

³³ Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 5.

I am particularly interested in Muslim perceptions of migration and travel. Said points out that through movement, which I regard as a form of creative placelessness, worldliness is experienced,³⁴ and this is also reflected in writing from within or about the Muslim world. Islam has been a cosmopolitan religion and has influenced the West's urban culture. According to Huggan, this results in a 'hybridisation of postcolonial metropolitan culture' and promotes 'transnational solidarities in an age of cultural fragmentation and the mass-dispersal of people, goods and ideas'.³⁵ This thesis also asks how migrants have moved beyond Homi K. Bhabha's *Third Space* of the *in-between* to a space where the *in-between* is no longer a question but where the *as well as* is embraced by migrants and writers.³⁶

I also examine the relationship between travel and arrival, that is, between the actual journey and the process of settling in and its aftermath. Movement presupposes setting foot on, or, in the eyes of some long-standing residents, even trespassing on, someone else's territory. Established residents are the ones in power; migrants are often powerless: their initial lack of knowledge of the language, cultures, traditions, and customs puts them in an inferior position. Migration denotes, therefore, also a struggle for power (including the migrants' dignity), for example through appropriating and exploring the 'host's' language, culture, and politics, and then shaping and re-forming it according to their desires. These processes include the (self-)definition of both the residents (the former outside, the West) and migrants. This thesis will also examine how this mirroring of the Self in the mirror of the Other works.

The second focus of this thesis is cultural translation as a means of communicating between where the traveller is from and where s/he is going or currently living. I appropriate the concept of linguistic translation and apply it to the translation between known and unknown cultures as a process of making sense of the unfamiliar. Translation is the negotiation of meanings; it does not assume that cultures are stable and can easily be transferred into another culture. Instead, translation (as travel) provides the basis for the creation of something new. As

³⁴ Said mentioned in Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, p. 9. Huggan refers to Said's article 'Third World Intellectuals and Metropolitan Culture', *Raritan*, 9.3 (1990), 27-50 (p. 30), where Said explores the two positions of 'worldliness' and 'cosmopolitanism'.

³⁵ Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, p. 9.

³⁶ See further down for a brief analysis of Bhabha's concept of hybridity.

Chambers points out, 'language is not primarily a means of communication; it is, above all, a means of cultural construction in which our very selves and sense are constituted'.³⁷ The translator, the migrant, chooses his/her translation 'materials' and lets them interact to describe his/her situation. S/he may make use of the 'gaps' and 'impurities',³⁸ that is, something that cannot be translated accurately. This marginal position is the space where migrants can negotiate multiple identities and re-create cultures.

I regard migration as a condition which is also expressed in terms of language. In my reading of the texts, language appears as a dislocated item of a migrant's cultural baggage which is removed from its original context and land, and which now influences the language of the majority in the new country of above.³⁹ Defining a new language in a new country, the language of the migrant, denotes his/her physical displacement. However, some migrant writers deliberately try to conform to the standards of the language of their writing, and therefore do not reflect on their migratory experiences in linguistic terms in their texts. I also explore what this says about their self-perception as writer and their perceived task as a literary figure in a wider cultural context.

In translation processes, gender is often the site of struggle, cultural concerns, and the search for one's identity. The third focus of this thesis is, therefore, the question how male and female migrants come to terms with their unsettling situation and their need to settle in. Stereotypes relating to gender seem particularly prominent: many people with Western origins largely associates masculinity and excesses of patriarchy with Islamic culture. This perception swings, however, between criticism and idealization:⁴⁰ there are people in the West who, on the one hand, genuinely want to help overcome the negative implications of patriarchy as it is – and they often forget this – also lived in many non-Muslim cultures; on the other, they need the patriarchal system of Islam as a counter-culture to underline their own supposedly gender-equal culture. I am interested in the negotiation of gender (roles) from a Muslim point of view in order to understand Muslim (post-)migration, and

³⁷ Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, p. 22.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 75.

³⁹ The German Turkish texts with their linguistic subversions and innovations to be discussed in this thesis will prove this point.

⁴⁰ See Malak, *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English*, p. 129.

men's and women's different approaches to their migratory experiences. Judith Butler's analysis of gender performativity provides the path to a consideration of these aspects.⁴¹ Communication is often one of the biggest hurdles in a new country; despite the fact that women keep communications alive, men are the dominant sex. It is noticeable that the writers in this thesis often portray women as the more successful migrants; I shall also address this issue.

(3)

Jonathan Culler has pointed out that a major defining point of migration writing is the study of literature as a transcultural phenomenon.⁴² This, however, is not a new understanding of literature: 'literature has always been transnational'.⁴³ It has always drawn upon other cultures and literatures, and been shaped by them. It is, therefore, necessary to consider the historical, societal, and cultural contexts in which these texts are set.⁴⁴ These are the different histories prior to immigration, migration processes, diverse perceptions of and ways of living Islam, and various ways of experiencing cultures.

The thesis explores and compares what I shall call German and English 'transcultural writing'. I dismiss the term 'intercultural', which is often employed in *Interkulturelle Germanistik* (Intercultural German Studies): this word supports the concept of the *in-between* (and thereby possible hierarchies among cultures) which many transcultural writers aim to overcome. In contrast, the term 'transcultural' suggests a critically creative engagement with the cultures and languages that are

⁴¹ See, for example, Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 10th anniversary edn (New York: Routledge, 1999 [1990]), and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993), or Jonathan Culler, 'Philosophy and Literature: The Fortunes of the Performative', *Poetics Today*, 21.3 (Fall 2000), 503-19.

⁴² Jonathan Culler, 'Comparative Literature, at Last', in *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, ed. by Charles Bernheimer, Parallax: Re-visions of Culture and Society (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 117-21 (p. 119).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 117-21 (p. 119).

⁴⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the consideration of contexts in comparative practice, see Roland Greene, 'Their Generation', in *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism* (see Culler, above), pp. 143-54 (p. 144). See also Malak, *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English*, p. 108.

available to writers of diverse backgrounds.⁴⁵ Furthermore, transcultural literature focuses on movement between languages, cultures, and religions. In this thesis, I concentrate on Islam, and Muslim migrants and post-migrants. These are people with a Muslim background – religiously or in a secularized way, culturally, historically, geographically, or linguistically – and a migrant’s experiences, which they might not have gone through themselves. Transcultural literature examines differences and similarities between these cultures and investigates what these tensions might say about contemporary German and British culture. I read the transcultural texts selected for this thesis largely as ‘writing at the margins’, which Huggan describes as an ‘oppositional discursive strategy’,⁴⁶ a form of counter-writing that consciously unsettles the fallacious notion of a homogenous German or British culture.

I am interested in post-*Gastarbeiter* and post-first generation literature,⁴⁷ and how the development from passive and assimilated *Gastarbeiter* or migrants to self-aware German and British Muslims is reflected in literature. First-generation migrant writing has long been the object of literary critics. This thesis will, however, address the aftermath of migration as it is represented in transcultural literature of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Examining this kind of literature (rather than earlier migrant writing) will point out the significance of current political trends in the West and cultural implications of the West’s interaction with Islam. Furthermore, this thesis’ transcultural writers have chosen various and often more challenging genres than their predecessors to capture their or their protagonists’ migratory experiences (ranging from the purely fictional novel to the supposedly authentic travel account). These genres reveal the writers’ agendas, which can be religiously, politically, or

⁴⁵ See, for example, Wolfgang Welsch, ‘Transkulturalität: Zwischen Globalisierung und Partikularisierung’, *Jahrbuch DaF*, 26 (2000), 327-51. He specifically dismisses Alois Wierlacher’s concept of the *intercultural* which Wierlacher researched at the Department for German as a Foreign Language at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich in the 1980s (see Alois Wierlacher, *Das Fremde und das Eigene: Prolegomena zu einer interkulturellen Germanistik*, Publikationen der Gesellschaft für Interkulturelle Germanistik, 1 (Munich: Iudicium, 1985).

⁴⁶ Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, p. 5 and p. 20.

⁴⁷ Tom Cheesman challenges a generational typology in ‘Juggling Burdens of Representation: Black, Red, Yellow and Turquoise’, *German Life and Letters*, 59.4 (2006), 471-87 (p. 471). See also my further remarks on that. Throughout this thesis, I refer to generations of writers primarily in relation to when they came to Germany, or when they were born there. Although this might also have an effect on their writing styles or choice of subject matter, my generational typology does not foreground these aspects.

purely artistically motivated, and are frequently a reaction to current cultural and political interests.

I have chosen writers of diverse, non-German and non-British backgrounds, who write in German and English. They are all transcultural: they write from a space beyond the *in-between*, and beyond fixed notions of cultures and nations. These authors are largely of a migrant background.⁴⁸ They explore Islam as they are of a Muslim background or have an explicit intellectual interest in Islam.⁴⁹ Apart from V.S. Naipaul, they are all Muslim writers, one of them an Islamic writer, someone who accentuates the significance of her religious belief in her writing (Leila Aboulela). These writers do not necessarily call themselves Muslim; however, they all deal with their Muslim or Islamic background in their writing, both deliberately and subtly.⁵⁰ With my choice of writers, I try to represent as wide a range across (post-)migrant Muslim writing as possible.⁵¹ Furthermore, I attempt to reach new and worthwhile insights into literary perceptions of Islam with the comparison of some of their texts.

The first part of the thesis deals with migration processes of the first generation. They go beyond notions of what in Germany is known as '*Opferliteratur*' or '*Literatur der Betroffenheit*' ('literature of victims' or 'literature of dismay', that is, literature written by former *Gastarbeiter* who regarded Germany as a cold and hostile place; it was often written in the writers' mother tongue). One of the currently most prominent German Turkish writers, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, came to Germany as a *Gastarbeiterin*. Yet she has left the *Opferliteratur* of the first generation of

⁴⁸ This is also the reason for calling this literature 'migrant writing'. I shall also use this term in this thesis. See, for example, Jim Jordan, 'Migrant Writing in Germany and the Politics of the Multicultural Society: Three Case Studies', in *Migrants in German-Speaking Countries: Aspects of Social and Cultural Experience*, ed. by Jim Jordan and Peter Barker, Modern German Studies, 2 (London: CILT Publications, 2000), pp. 97-113.

⁴⁹ Other writers such as Zafer Şenocak or Navid Kermani would fall into this category. However, I do not find their primary texts useful for this project. Kermani's latest publication, the novel *Kurzmitteilung* [Short Message] (Zurich: Amman, 2007) is an exception; it was, however, only published in April 2007 when I had already completed the analysis of the primary literature.

⁵⁰ I follow Malak's differentiation between 'Muslim' and 'Islamic' here: '*Muslim* is derived from the Arabic work that denotes the *person* who espouses the religion of Islam or is shaped by its cultural impact, irrespective of being secular, agnostic, or practicing believer. The term *Islamic* emphasizes the *faith* of Islam. It denotes thoughts, rituals, activities, and institutions specifically proclaimed and sanctioned by Islam or directly associated with its theological traditions.' (Malak, *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English*, p. 5; original emphasis).

⁵¹ Throughout this thesis, I use the terms 'transcultural', '(post-)migrant', and 'Muslim' writing interchangeably, depending on which aspect of this writing (just explained) I wish to emphasize when discussing the texts.

migrant writers behind. Instead, she shows the consciously innovative side of the German Turkish migrant writer who feels and uses the advantage of being able to draw upon various languages and cultures for her writing. Her novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei / hat zwei Türen / aus einer kam ich rein / aus der anderen ging ich raus* (*Life is a Caravanserai Has Two Doors I Came In One I Went Out the Other*)⁵² (1992) explores the pre-story of migrants. It thematizes the creation of a home on the move. This text can effectively be compared with Monica Ali's popular and stylistically less challenging novel, *Brick Lane* (2003). Here, a different notion of home as a fixed place that secures stability is central. This idea of home is linked to the migration experiences of the first generation of British Muslims. A comparative analysis of these two texts highlights contrary notions of home (movement in the German text and stability in the English text), which are based on different pre-histories and histories of migration.

The thesis then continues with an exploration of travel and contrasting views, approaches and perceptions of some parts of the Muslim world. Travel is a different movement from migration, and travel writing offers new perspectives on the significance of travel for Muslims and experiences of Islam. Here, the need to find a home is not the focus; countries are only visited, even if travel also means a return to a Muslim's religious home as on the hajj. Ilija Trojanow's account of his hajj, *Zu den Heiligen Quellen des Islam: Als Pilger nach Mekka und Medina* (*Mumbai to Mecca [the German title translates literally as To the Holy Origins of Islam: As Pilgrim to Mecca and Medina]*) (2003), describes the significance of the traditional pilgrimage for every Muslim. The book was not widely received in Germany and only found resonance among people with an intellectual interest in Islam. V.S. Naipaul's travel books about his journeys to non-Arab Muslim countries, *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981) and *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples* (1998), were broadly acknowledged at the time of their publication, in both the West and the Muslim world, including South Asia. From a Western, here Naipaul's point of view, they give an outsider's (a secular Hindu's) perspective on the outside (Islam). Trojanow's travel account declares itself a specifically anti-

⁵² Wherever possible I use the published translations of the German primary texts (included in parentheses behind the original title), otherwise I translate the (titles of the) primary texts myself (included in brackets behind the original title).

Naipaul project; a comparison of these two writers' texts therefore sheds a valuable light on Western travel writing about Islam.

The next part of the thesis focuses on the second generation and the atmosphere among young Muslims in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Feridun Zaimoğlu is a prominent representative of the concerns and life-styles of young German Turkish people in Germany of the 1990s. His *Kanak Sprak: 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* [*Kanak Speak: 24 Dissonances from the Margins of Society*] (1995) established his reputation as an innovative, radical writer. This collection of texts is based on allegedly authentic interviews and can therefore be regarded as documentary fiction, a genre which seems to bring across the concerns of young German Turks of the time most effectively. Hanif Kureishi portrays more religious experiences among young British Muslims in his fictional novel *The Black Album* (1995). His focus is on radicalism among young British Muslims in the late 1980s. A comparison with Zaimoğlu's portrayal of young German Turkish men – also in terms of genre – points up diverse appropriations of Islam as a definer for masculinity, particularly since radical Islam is widely associated with young male Muslims.

An exploration of masculinity necessitates an examination of female experiences of Islam in Germany and Britain. In Zaimoğlu's female pendant to *Kanak Sprak*, *Koppstoff: Kanaka Sprak vom Rande der Gesellschaft* [*Head Stuff: Kanaka Speak from the Margins of Society*] (1998), he addresses the concerns of young female Muslims in Germany, particularly after the increased racial attacks in the mid-1990s. I read this text as documentary fiction in line with Özdamar's semi-autobiographical text *MutterZunge* (*Mother Tongue*) (1990). These German-language texts are compared with Leila Aboulela's novels *The Translator* (1999) and *Minaret* (2005). Aboulela, who has not received broad academic attention so far, seems to write from between generations: strictly speaking, she is a first-generation migrant (Aboulela is not a child of immigrants, her wealthy family bought a flat in London in 1982), yet she mainly portrays the post-migratory experiences of the second generation. Female (post-)migrant experiences are significant for understanding contemporary transcultural writing which is widely written for an audience that is interested in Islam and Muslim (women's) issues. The appropriation and transformation of Islam in transcultural literature is most explicit here, as I

interpret the women (as they are portrayed in these texts) as the more successful migrants than men.

Transcultural writing has received a number of synonyms such as 'migrant literature', 'literature of the *in-between*', 'minority' or 'diasporic writing'.⁵³ According to Jim Jordan, German Turkish writing challenges 'the master narratives of nationhood, cultural assimilation, or even gay liberation'.⁵⁴ This also holds true for the English-language texts discussed in this thesis. Transcultural writing goes beyond cultural and national boundaries. Tom Cheesman employs the term 'axial writing' (for German Turkish writing) to describe a literature 'that thematis[es] migrant experience'.⁵⁵ For him, axial writers carry the 'burden of representation [of migrants or a minority of which these writers might not see themselves being part of; F.M.] [...] which is imposed on them by the public'.⁵⁶ He challenges the general categorisations of German Turkish writing, which is usually accomplished according to generations: migrant writing started as *Opferliteratur*, then moved on to be 'ethnic' writing, and later turned into 'diasporic' writing, which 'explores or forges connections between a given minority and other minorities, past and present, in Germany and other countries, drawing on postcolonial thinking in order to deconstruct the stereotypes of "self" and "other" which erect boundaries and damage communication between minorities and majorities generally'.⁵⁷ The longer established English-language postcolonial literatures have set the standards for communicating (post-)migrant experiences that have been taken up in contemporary German transcultural writing.

⁵³ See, for example, Jim Jordan, 'More than a Metaphor: The Passing of the Two Worlds Paradigm in German-Language Diasporic Literature', *German Life and Letters*, 59.4 (2006), 488-99.

⁵⁴ Jim Jordan, 'Introduction: Crossing Boundaries: Changing Perspectives on Contemporary Diasporic Cultures in German', *German Life and Letters*, 59.4 (2006), 469-70 (p. 469). See also Jim Jordan, 'Spieler, Mitspieler, Schauspieler: Die postmoderne interkulturelle Literatur in Deutschland', in *Die andere deutsche Literatur: Istanbul Vorträge*, ed. by Manfred Durzak and Nilüfer Kuruyazıcı in cooperation with Canan Şenöz Ayata (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), pp. 118-24. Here, Jordan points towards the postmodern element of intercultural literature in Germany, exemplified by 'play'.

⁵⁵ Cheesman, 'Juggling Burdens of Representation', 471-87 (p. 471).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 473-74. Cheesman also points to 'four basic strategies, four ways in which writers deal with the burden of representation and thereby explore [...] the meaning of integration': they are 'axialism', 'the kind of writing that fulfils public expectations of "minority" writers', 'refusal', 'parodic ethnicisation', and 'glocalism' (pp. 477-87). These strategies represent the grouping of German Turkish writing according to generations.

Leslie A. Adelson's latest publication *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature* (2005) seeks 'a new critical grammar for understanding the configuration of cultural contact and Turkish presence in contemporary German literature'.⁵⁸ She dismisses the idea of a literature of the *in-between* and highlights the 'cultural effects of Turkish migration' for Germany's 'reorientation in the 1990s'. For her, 'the literature of Turkish migration reconfigures the sign of ethnicity instead'.⁵⁹

Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's concept of *littérature mineure* (*minor literature*) also needs to be considered. *Minor literature* is 'that which a minority constructs within a major language'.⁶⁰ It employs deterritorialized language, a language that is freed from its historical, geographical, and subjective roots. I question, however, whether it is possible to become depersonalized (other than oneself) in that way, even if some 'minor' writers appear to work with the idealistic notion that one can get back to a primary form of meaning (foremost Özdamar). *Minor literature* is also highly political as 'its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics'.⁶¹ Thus, the position which the writers who feature in this thesis occupy in German and British literature is a political statement in itself: originating from non-German and non-British cultures, they have largely produced their writing at the margins of literary canons. Generally, readers place 'minor' writers there. However, as these writers bring different languages and cultural experiences with them, they are liberated from the 'centre's' standards and expectations, and can unsettle fixed ideas of national literature. Yet it is questionable whether 'minor' writers have to be particularly innovative in order to be heard: being 'different' can become a strategy to gain a place in a literary canon. It seems that once their voice is established, some 'minor' writers start moving to the 'centre' and become part of the mainstream (for example, Naipaul and Zaimoğlu). 'Minor'

⁵⁸ Leslie A. Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration*, Studies in European Culture and History (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 5. Adelson has already explored some of the issue discussed in this monograph in previous articles, which are listed in Appendix II.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 4-5, 22, 15, and 124.

⁶⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 'What Is a Minor Literature?', in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. by Dana Polan, Foreword by Réda Bensmaïa (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986; originally publ. as *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1975)), pp. 16-27 (p. 16).

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 17.

becomes 'major', something which is frequently the result of the demands of the literary market, the increasing popularity of 'minor' literature, and the writers' desire to establish themselves. I do not think, therefore, that the literature discussed in this thesis is strictly *minor literature* in Deleuze's and Guattari's understanding of the term.

The selected writers position themselves variously within German and English literature: some of them perceive themselves as part of the canon (Naipaul); others still see themselves as part of their 'original' culture (Özdamar); yet others are not concerned with these classifications and have their own, clearly vocalized agenda (Aboulela); and some writers do not admit their role within the mainstream and still regard themselves as marginal writers (Zaimoğlu). However, they all have the experience of transculturality, of having more than one culture at hand, living outside as well as beyond them, and creating something new out of this transcultural position.

Critics often employ metaphors to describe transcultural literature: common expressions are 'bridges',⁶² 'crossings', and 'thresholds'.⁶³ These terms are meant to acknowledge the writer's role as translator between languages and cultures.⁶⁴ Some writers apply metaphors themselves to describe their work: Özdamar, for example, chooses the word 'caravanserai' as part of the title of one of her novels, by which she characterizes her protagonist's life as a migrant. Trains feature in her work prominently as a metaphor for a life which is constantly on the move and from where a migrant's identity springs.⁶⁵ Most of the terms for transcultural writing seem to imply a 'two worlds paradigm', the irreconcilable clashing of cultures, religions, and

⁶² For a detailed analysis of the image of the bridge in German Turkish writing, see Moray McGowan, 'Brücken und Brücken-Köpfe: Wandlungen einer Metapher in der türkisch-deutschen Literatur', in *Die andere deutsche Literatur* (see Jordan, above), pp. 31-40.

⁶³ Cf. Christian Begemann, "'Kanakensprache': Schwellenphänomene in der deutschsprachigen Literatur ausländischer AutorInnen der Gegenwart', in *Schwellen: Germanistische Erkundungen einer Metapher*, ed. by Nicholas Saul and others (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999), pp. 209-20.

⁶⁴ This notion implies that the writer is situated in the *in-between*. However, as briefly mentioned above, more and more writers and critics argue against this idea, for example, Leslie A. Adelson, in 'Against Between: A Manifesto', in *Zafer Şenocak*, ed. by Tom Cheesman and Karin E. Yeşilada, *Contemporary German Writers* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 130-43. Adelson has developed her idea 'against between' further in *The Turkish Turn*.

⁶⁵ For example, at the end of *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*, the narrator leaves Turkey by train to go to Germany. In an interview with Annette Wierschke, Özdamar compares being at home with being on a train (in Annette Wierschke, *Schreiben als Selbstbehauptung: Kulturkonflikt und Identität in den Werken von Aysel Özakin, Alev Tekinay und Emine Sevgi Özdamar* (Frankfurt a.M.: IKO, 1994) (= doctoral thesis, University of Minnesota, 1994), p. 259).

languages. It seems to be the writers' task to bridge these worlds, partly because the audience expects them to do so.⁶⁶ However, in Jordan's words, 'authors no longer conceive of themselves as between cultures',⁶⁷ or stuck in what Azade Seyhan refers to as 'borderlands'.⁶⁸ A clear example is the early work of Feridun Zaimoğlu: he focuses on the second and third generations of migrants who, in opposition to their parents' generation, do not see themselves as 'victims' of a 'cold' Germany anymore. Instead, they have carved out their own creative spaces beyond definitions and expectations of being placed in the *in-between*.⁶⁹

Salman Rushdie's notion of *Imaginary Homelands* and Benedict Anderson's idea of *Imagined Communities* that are created in diasporas come into play here.⁷⁰ They refer to the artificiality of being removed from home and the subsequent necessity to retain something of that old home in a new place, to create a 'home of the mind', that is, something that only belongs to them.⁷¹ These ideas are also explored in transcultural writing, which, however, goes beyond them: it also looks into the consequences of these *Imagined Homelands* or *Communities* for today's post-migrants. Thus, transcultural literature as it is discussed in this thesis outlines places 'outside the nation' and outside specific cultures where translation processes take place and where its writers' creativity lies.⁷² I therefore regard the term 'transcultural' as the closest definition of what the writers represent and depict in their writing: they live among as well as beyond various cultures, and write about cultural encounters and their challenges for the transcultural migrant and writer.

⁶⁶ Jim Jordan, 'More than a Metaphor', 488-99.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 491.

⁶⁸ Azade Seyhan, 'Geographies of Memory: Protocols of Writing in the Borderlands', in *Multiculturalism in Transit: A German-American Exchange*, ed. by Klaus J. Millich and Jeffrey M. Peck, International Political Currents, 3 (New York: Berghahn, 1998), pp. 193-212.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Feridun Zaimoğlu, 'Gastarbeiterliteratur: Ali macht Männchen', in *Globalkolorit: Multikulturalismus und Populärkultur*, ed. by Ruth Mayer and Mark Terkessidis (St. Ändra-Wörtern: Hannibal, 1998), pp. 85-97 (p. 91).

⁷⁰ Salman Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands' (1982), in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-91* (London: Granta in association with Penguin, 1991 [1992 printing]), pp. 9-21, and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. and extended edn (London: Verso, 1991 [1983]).

⁷¹ Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', pp. 9-21 (p. 10).

⁷² Cf. Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation*, Translation, Transnation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Seyhan has developed this idea further, which coincides with the increasing perception of writers as 'non-in-between' writers, in 'From Minor Literature, Across Border Culture, to Hyphenated Criticism', in *Reading the Shape of the World: Toward an International Cultural Studies*, ed. by Henry Schwarz and Richard Dienst, Politics and Culture, 4 (Oxford: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 15-29.

Postcolonial criticism serves as a useful tool for understanding transcultural literature.⁷³ Bhabha's approach to hybridity comes into play when analysing processes of identity formation within the context of migration: writers are often placed in a *Third Space* of the *in-between*. This is a temporal construction that ensures fertile and dynamic interaction between cultures. As pointed out earlier, this position is often rejected by transcultural writers now. Mimicry and the advantage of the *double vision* due to having a different cultural background than the inhabitants of the country they are now living in also frequently feature in transcultural texts.⁷⁴

Furthermore, the ideological construction of otherness within the framework of cultural exchange is a major subject addressed in the texts. The Other is the lynchpin when dealing with the perceptions of unknown cultures. It serves as a fixing device of cultural differences in non-postcolonial texts.⁷⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of *Othering* needs to be mentioned here.⁷⁶ *Othering* is practised in order to stabilize the differences between the Self and the Other: the Other shall remain contradistinctive in order to differentiate it from the known; yet simultaneously, there is to remain a certain scope of identification with the Self in order not to lose the control over the (yet) unknown.⁷⁷ *Othering* is used primarily to establish the Self. Spivak challenges notions of power and knowledge as well as the representation of the Other. In the texts considered in this thesis, the Other, Muslims, speak and represent themselves, and thus might provide the audience with a more differentiated view on Islam and the Muslim world.

⁷³ Throughout this thesis, the term 'postcolonial' applies to the transcultural practice of producing literature which, above all, considers the interaction of various cultures and languages, notions of power and hierarchy, Self and Other, and the questioning of canons and the distinction between 'centre' and 'margin'. 'Postcoloniality' is often (but not necessarily, as in Germany) the result of 'post-coloniality' which is to mean literally 'after colonialism', and which often entails migratory movements. On this basis, I differentiate between 'postcolonial' and 'post-colonial'.

⁷⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, 'The Commitment to Theory', in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 19-39 (p. 25 and pp. 37-39). See also Robert J.C. Young who takes a closer look at hybridity. He analyses various approaches to hybridity in the context of (post-)colonialism (for example, Mikhail Bakhtin, Homi K. Bhabha and others) in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995).

⁷⁵ Cf. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, New Accents (London: Routledge, 1989 [2001 printing]), p. 103.

⁷⁶ As explored in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Rani of Simur: An Essay in Reading the Archives', *History and Theory*, 24.3 (1985), 247-72 (repr. in *Europe and Its Others*, 1: *Proceedings of the Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature 1984*, University of Essex, ed. by Francis Barker and others (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985), pp. 128-51).

⁷⁷ Cf. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, p. 103.

Edward W. Said's analysis of *Orientalism* is significant for my reading of the primary material. For Said, *Orientalism* is 'a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience'. For him, the European self-definition is produced with reference to the Other (which leads back to my introductory remarks why an examination of Islam in literature needs to be considered when faced with current developments of the perceptions of Islam in German and British society). The conceptions of power, of controlling the Other, and of 'textualizing the Other' are vital. Furthermore, the West has kept a distance and perceived the Orient, or the Other respectively, in fragments only in order to represent and effectively to control it. This practice has notionally ensured the Orient's availability and easy handling. More specifically, Islam has long 'served' as focus for a European fear, an observation which reaches to the widespread current perception of Islam as something fundamentally foreign and incomprehensible.⁷⁸

Orientalism is perceived primarily in the light of imperial concepts of control and disempowerment. Mary Louise Pratt writes about 'imperial eyes', which keep the Orient under control through close observation.⁷⁹ Rana Kabbani focuses on 'imperial fictions', the creation of myths, when, for example, examining the feminization of 'the Oriental' as part of the colonizer's power-fantasy.⁸⁰ This will be of particular interest when exploring gender relations, and specifically masculinity, in Islam.

Meyda Yeğenoğlu offers re-readings of *Orientalism*. She puts emphasis on the Western idea of imagining oneself to belong 'to a specific culture called the "West"' and thus establishing an unbridgeable distance to the Other. As an Islamic feminist, she pays particular attention to the veil as a symbol of frustration and anger for the West: veiled women can 'look without being seen', which is a potential threat. The veil is also an 'element of a highly charged fantasmatic scene', and is supposedly hiding the 'real Orient'. Its interpretation contributes to the 'production of an *essential* "Orientalness"'.⁸¹ Yeğenoğlu also draws connections to the women's

⁷⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 1, 20, 127, and 59.

⁷⁹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁸⁰ Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, for example, p. 6.

⁸¹ Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, Cambridge Cultural Social Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 4, 43, 63, 44, 47, and 48 (original emphasis).

(ab)use in nationalist movements in the Middle East and North Africa. Both the act of veiling (as in Algeria), as resistance against the West, and the act of unveiling (as in Turkey), as a (Eurocentric) representation of modernization, turned women into a signifier, and the veil into a symbol and battleground for the construction of national identity.⁸²

Another area that comes into play is the relationship between culture and text: the concept of *culture as text*.⁸³ Doris Bachmann-Medick points out that through representation culture is produced and reproduced.⁸⁴ This is of particular concern in this thesis as Islam has been and still is extremely textualized: it is re-produced by the media to such an extent that the imagined Islam, an 'idea Islam', seems more real than reality. James Clifford and George E. Marcus also employ the term 'writing culture' in order to capture the idea that cultures are fixed and made graspable by their textualization.⁸⁵ Cultures cannot, however, be enclosed, an issue which transcultural writers frequently address. Textualization processes, which means not simply writing down what is experienced, but making these experiences 'come to life' again by writing about them, are a considerable feature in texts of travel and migration.

A further area of study that has influenced this work is the examination of the primary texts in the light of cultural translation processes. In 'The Task of the Translator', Walter Benjamin sketches out how the interrelations between languages and cultures are made visible through linguistic translation processes, but claims that cultures cannot be translated.⁸⁶ As cultures cannot be fixed, a one-to-one relationship between cultures in translation processes does not exist. Bachmann-Medick points

⁸² Ibid., Chapter 5, 'The Battle of the Veil: Between Orientalism and Nationalism', pp. 121-44.

⁸³ Cf. Doris Bachmann-Medick, 'Einleitung', in *Kultur als Text: Die anthropologische Wende in der Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. by Doris Bachmann-Medick, Fischer, 12781: Kultur und Medien (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Taschenbuchverlag, 1996), pp. 7-64.

⁸⁴ Doris Bachmann-Medick, 'Einleitung: Übersetzung als Repräsentation fremder Kulturen', in *Übersetzung als Repräsentation fremder Kulturen*, ed. by Doris Bachmann-Medick, Göttinger Beiträge zur internationalen Übersetzungsforschung (Berlin: Schmidt, 1997), pp. 3-25 (p. 7): 'Kultur wird produziert und reproduziert, indem sie repräsentiert'.

⁸⁵ See James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, A School of American Research Advanced Seminar (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 1-26 (p. 7). This volume contains various analyses of ethnography.

⁸⁶ Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator' (1921), trans. by Harry Zohn, in *Selected Writings*, 1: 1913-1926, ed. by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 253-63 (originally publ. in Charles Baudelaire, 'Tableaux parisiens': *Deutsche Übertragung mit einem Vorwort über die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*, von Walter Benjamin (Heidelberg: Weißbach, 1923)).

out the relationship between translation as representation and power (as speaking for others).⁸⁷ Translation is an 'instrument in the interaction between cultures', but 'not as transfer but as interweaving of the own and the foreign'.⁸⁸ Bhabha therefore regards culture as the 'locus [rather than object; F.M.] of translation'.⁸⁹ Similarly, Michael Cronin points out that 'minority-language cultures are translation cultures *par excellence*'.⁹⁰ (Post-)Migrants are constantly faced with communicating between cultures. Douglas Robinson emphasizes the relationship between Empire, the cause of migration processes, subsequent diaspora and translation as a migrant's condition.⁹¹ Spivak explains that through language, identity is created. An openness to the Other as well as an openness to permitting change in the Self guarantees 'successful' translation processes.⁹² Michaela Wolf sceptically regards 'translation as a linguistic and cultural practice which in fact produces the "Other"'. She points out that translation is closely connected to interpretation, that is, an asymmetrical power-relation.⁹³ Rushdie explains that translation, having more than one language and culture available, is a gain, not a loss.⁹⁴ All these diverse approaches lead to the assumption that translation is a highly difficult process which requires much consideration and cultural empathy.

Language thus is a significant vehicle for conveying a migrant's experiences in transcultural writing. As one of the most obvious items on a migrant's itinerary it is often subject to change on its way from one country and culture to another. This is a major aspect in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire*

⁸⁷ Doris Bachmann-Medick, 'Einleitung: Übersetzung als Repräsentation fremder Kulturen', pp. 3-25 (p. 10).

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 13 and p. 14: 'Instrument in der Auseinandersetzung zwischen den Kulturen'; 'nicht als Transfer, sondern als Verflechtung von Eigenem und Fremden'.

⁸⁹ Homi K. Bhabha referred to in Michaela Wolf, 'Culture as Translation – and Beyond: Ethnographic Models of Representation in Translation Studies', in *Crosscultural Transgressions: Research Models in Translation Studies II: Historical and Ideological Issues*, ed. by Theo Hermans (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2002), pp. 180-92 (pp. 180, 183, and 184).

⁹⁰ Michael Cronin, 'The Cracked Looking Glass of Servants: Translation and Minority Languages in a Global Age', in *Translation and Minority*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (= Special Issue, *The Translator*, 4.2 (1998)), 145-62 (p. 147). See also his *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000), pp. 26-32 and p. 95.

⁹¹ Douglas Robinson, *Translation and Empire: Postcolonial Theories Explained*, Translation Theories Explained, 4 (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1997).

⁹² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation', in *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*, ed. by Michèle Barrett and Anne Phillips (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), pp. 177-200 (p. 177).

⁹³ Wolf, 'Culture as Translation', pp. 180-92.

⁹⁴ Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', pp. 9-21 (p. 17).

Writes Back. This thesis will closely study the import of language on migrant writing, and linguistic re-appropriation and subversion processes.

A third field that forms the background of this thesis is scholarship on travel writing and migration theory. Such work is essential for comprehending modes of mobility in the present time. Travel is supposed to be an exploration of the world, yet it is mainly the Self that is at the centre of travel writing. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan pinpoint the perpetuation of the 'superiority' of the traveller.⁹⁵ This thesis is, however, primarily concerned with migration as a travel-translation process. James Clifford differentiates between the voluntary act of travelling and economically or politically forced migration processes that lead to diasporas. Unlike travel, this is not a temporary situation but the attempt to create 'collective homes away from home'.⁹⁶ In this context, this thesis follows a direct transcultural approach to the texts: this includes, for example, questions of cultural contact and exchange, and notions of power and representation. Chambers has analysed experiences of displacement and, in this context, regards identity as something which is constantly 'in transformation'.⁹⁷ Pratt has examined notions of transculturality within a colonial context and has coined the term 'contact zone', 'the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict'.⁹⁸ It is the encounter between the Self and the Other which is at the centre of transculturality.⁹⁹

I also focus on the translation of the journey onto paper, its textualization: in this context, Barbara Korte points out that travel writing is a European genre and an imperialist mode of representation.¹⁰⁰ Joan Pau Rubiés' study on the relationship

⁹⁵ Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. xiii.

⁹⁶ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 66; see there also the chapter 'Diasporas', pp. 244-77 (p. 251).

⁹⁷ Cf. Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, p. 24.

⁹⁸ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 6.

⁹⁹ Cronin points out 'the centrality of translation to the practice of travel', which is 'often strangely absent from the critical literature on travel', for example, by Pratt and Clifford (*Across the Lines*, p. 102). However, Cronin refers to linguistic translation rather than cultural translation which is the focus of this thesis.

¹⁰⁰ Barbara Korte, 'Exploring Without a Mission?: Postcolonial Travel in a Global World', in *Colonies – Missions – Cultures in the English-Speaking World: General and Comparative Studies*, ed. by Gerhard Stilz, ZAA Studies: Language, Literature, Culture, 12 (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2001), pp. 383-95 (p. 383).

between travel writing and ethnography is linked to this perception of travel. She also applies the notion of cultural translation to illustrate the translating of 'the native's' voice during colonialist movements.¹⁰¹ Susan Bassnett focuses on the fictionalization of travel for a home audience, also in an imperial context.¹⁰² One major aspect that features in travel writing, the representation of the Other, is re-appropriated in transcultural writing: the 'authentic' voice of the formerly colonized can now be heard, it is no longer entirely fictionalized by Western travellers.

This thesis concentrates on Muslim travel as a Muslim's lifelong learning process and his/her identification as a Muslim.¹⁰³ Billie Melman gives an overview of the Muslim pilgrimage to 'the cradle of Islam' and the hajj's textual realization first as ethnography, later as travelogue. Furthermore, he describes the idea of reliving the journey whilst writing it down (which is a significant issue in Trojanow's account of his hajj).¹⁰⁴ *Hijra*, the 'migration', that is, the forced journey into exile, marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar and is therefore of great significance for every Muslim. Today, many Muslims do not live in Islam's original land, but all over the world. Having been visited during imperialist times, Islam has travelled back to its former colonizers. This kind of travel is an arrival process: it is the development of Muslim identity in non-Muslim environments.

Another area of study that has looked into notions of marginality is gender and feminist criticism. Butler's understanding of performativity is of particular value for this thesis: it is not a conscious act, but the effect of gender discourse that comes across as the non-intentional repetition or re-staging of norms, and that is constructed in this way. I employ Butler's analysis of performativity to capture the idea that a Muslim's gender identity (like any other form of identity) is constantly re-valued.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Joan Pau Rubiés, 'Travel Writing and Ethnography', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 242-260 (p. 251-55).

¹⁰² Susan Bassnett, 'Travel Writing and Gender', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (see Rubiés, above), pp. 225-41 (pp. 235-39).

¹⁰³ Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, 'Preface', in *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, ed. by Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. xii-xxii, and 'Social Theory in the Study of Muslim Societies', in *Muslim Travellers* (see Eickelman and Piscatori, above), pp. 3-25.

¹⁰⁴ Billie Melman, 'The Middle East/Arabia: "The Cradle of Islam"', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (see Rubiés, above), pp. 105-21 (pp. 110-12 and pp. 116-19).

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Butler, *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*, or Culler, 'Philosophy and Literature', 503-19.

This is especially significant for Muslims living in the West where power relations are easily recognizable.

Feminism has also taken a closer look into language, especially in connection with power relations between male and female migrants. There is an urge to overcome the 'social silence' imposed on women in patriarchal societies.¹⁰⁶ As a number of Western women feel the need to give Muslim women a voice, they do not see how Muslim women (like many other women) increasingly reclaim their language and their voice, and liberate their language from patriarchal uses. This is a notion which is of great importance for Islamic feminists.¹⁰⁷

As some of the writers specifically deal with Muslim women's issues, a look into Islamic feminism is essential. Many Islamic feminists, such as Margot Badran, Miriam Cooke, Fatima Mernissi, Leila Ahmet, or Haideh Moghissi, have asked how Islamic feminism is possible in a Western framework and often under patronizing Western 'guidance'. In addition, Valentine M. Moghadam has explored the relationship between feminism and national identity.¹⁰⁸ A major element in Islamic feminism is the necessity of belief, and its liberation from patriarchal readings of the Qur'an and therefore interpretations of Islam, and the striving for equality within a religious framework.¹⁰⁹ However, Islamic feminism represents a diversity of 'speaking positions' and can also be regarded as a discursive strategy.¹¹⁰

Within this framework of translation, travel, and gender, Islam is the central theme within this thesis. For background knowledge, I have primarily consulted historical works by John L. Esposito, Gerhard Endress, and John Alden Williams, works dealing with Muslim life in the West, for example by Philip Lewis and Jørgen S. Nielsen, and works looking into current issues foremost by Ziauddin Sardar, who grounds his analysis of contemporary Islam in its historical developments.

¹⁰⁶ Cora Kaplan, 'Language and Gender' (1986), in *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*, ed. by Deborah Cameron, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1998 [1990]), pp. 54-64 (p. 62).

¹⁰⁷ See Margot Badran, 'Islamic Feminism Revisited', *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 02 March 2006 <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/761/cu4.htm>> [accessed 16 March 2007] (30 para.).

¹⁰⁸ Valentine M. Moghadam, ed., *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies* (London: Publ. for the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research by Zed, 1994).

¹⁰⁹ See Badran, 'Islamic Feminism Revisited' (para. 4 of 30).

¹¹⁰ Miriam Cooke, *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism Through Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. xxvii and p. 59. See bibliography for works of Islamic feminists.

Furthermore, I have drawn upon works that look into cultural aspects of Islam, for instance, the aesthetics of Islam (Oliver Leaman).¹¹¹

There is extensive scholarship on the selected writers, yet hardly any of it has a focus on issues relating to their characters' perceptions of Islam. The criticism usually emphasizes language issues, cultural exchange or multiculturalism, migration or sub- and youth culture, but Islam is a side-effect rather than the main point of discussion. Furthermore, critics tend to focus on writers of one language, rather than on comparisons between German- and English-language (or any other language) writing.¹¹²

A comparison between German and English transcultural writing exposes the limitations of some assumptions of postcolonial theory:¹¹³ Germany never had to 'write back' in the same way as the British (or other European) Empire(s) did in the second half of the twentieth century. Postcolonial theory sprang from an imperial context, but, one of imperialism's entailments, migration, is not limited to colonial experiences and, therefore, to the study of literature coming from formerly colonized societies. I base my technique of employing postcolonial theory to read German transcultural writing on Dirk Göttsche, who claims that postcolonial studies currently regard literature as 'cultural practice with a significant social function[.] [Postcolonial studies] focus on phenomena such as cultural difference, mimicry, hybridity, creolization, and social performance'.¹¹⁴ I thus apply postcolonial terms when analysing German-language writing due to the similarities of German and British migration and post-migration experiences, regardless of the cause of the move to the new country of abode.

¹¹¹ See bibliography for the titles of these authors' books.

¹¹² There are few exceptions such as Sabine Milz, 'Ethnicity and/or Nationality Writing in Contemporary Canada and Germany: A Comparative Study of Marlene Nourbese Philip's and Emine Sevgi Özdamar's Writing of Hybridity and Its Public and Critical Reception', *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 48.3 (2000), 254-68.

¹¹³ I would like to thank Dr Peter Davies (University of Edinburgh) for a fruitful discussion of my comparative strategy in relation to postcolonial theory.

¹¹⁴ Dirk Göttsche, 'Emine Sevgi Özdamar's Erzählung *Der Hof im Spiegel*: Spielräume einer postkolonialen Lektüre deutsch-türkischer Literatur', *German Life and Letters*, 59.4 (October 2006), 513-25 (pp. 517-18): 'kulturelle Praxis mit entschiedener sozialer Funktion[.] [Postcolonial studies] konzentrieren sich auf Phänomene wie kulturelle Differenz, Mimikry, Hybridität, Kreolisierung und soziale Performanz'.

English literature often serves as the basis for comparisons with other literatures; it is the dominant component of such comparisons and thereby implies that the 'other' literature only serves as a tool to analyse English literature. However, I suggest that German transcultural literature has gained a distinctly self-aware position within European transcultural literature. Over the past thirty years, German transcultural writers have developed the self-confidence of being different whilst being part of German literature (even if the current trend, which could not be dealt with in this theses, but will be analysed briefly in the conclusion, suggests stylistic assimilation to German mainstream writing and thus a decreasing awareness of being 'different', and renewed stylistic innovations in English transcultural writing and an increasing positive acknowledgement of 'difference').

A comparative analysis of the treatment of language (both within the texts and on a meta-level), the exploration of the relationship between home and movement, and gender and its performativity in a post-migrant context will offer a more differentiated understanding of postcolonial notions of 're-placing language' and 're-placing the text' than a pure look at traditional post-colonial literatures.¹¹⁵ It will challenge methods of understanding postcolonial writing from its (German) 'margins'. I go beyond a purely Anglo- or German-centred context to show that German transcultural literature has a place in postcolonial criticism as much as English transcultural writing. Furthermore, a comparative reading of those literatures with their different approaches to Islam will contribute to a European understanding of Islam in post-migrant cultures.

The critical works on Emine Sevgi Özdamar mainly come from Anglo-American scholarship. Maïke Ahrends bases her argument on Rushdie's idea of migrant literature and postcolonial scholarship. Her notion is that identity is forever unstable. (This idea is also supported by Regula Müller.¹¹⁶) Ahrends also takes a closer look at

¹¹⁵ See Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, Chapter 2, 'Re-placing Language: Textual Strategies in Post-colonial Writing', pp. 38-77, and Chapter 3, 'Re-placing the Text: The Liberation of Post-colonial Writing', pp. 78-115.

¹¹⁶ Regula Müller, "Ich war Mädchen, war ich Sultanin": Weitgeöffnete Augen betrachten türkische Frauengeschichte(n): Zum Karawanserei-Roman von Emine Sevgi Özdamar', in *Denn du tanzst auf einem Seil: Positionen deutschsprachiger MigrantInnenliteratur*, ed. by Sabine Fischer and Moray McGowan, Stauffenburg discussion, 2 (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1997), pp. 133-49.

Turkey in an Islamic context in relation to Özdamar's examination of language.¹¹⁷ Annette Wierschke regards culture as a dynamic process and also bases her argument on Bhabha and Rushdie. She focuses on the narrators' relationship with Turkey and language as a means of her self-exploration. Wierschke also takes a closer look at Özdamar's conception of '*Fremde*' ('foreignness'), which cannot be located exactly. For her, Özdamar's narrators look for and eventually find their identity between languages and cultures.¹¹⁸ Kader Konuk explains that identity is something 'in process', which questions notions of authenticity. She describes the instability of 'home' ('Heim-at', as Konuk explains, 'at' is the imperative of the Turkish verb *atmak* meaning 'to throw' or 'to discard') and thus a migrant's identity, and languages as an articulation of difference. For her, Özdamar's language is an expression of her hybridity. She also analyses migration on a stylistic level and concludes that identity lies *in* movement.¹¹⁹ Stephanie Bird concentrates on representations of national identity,¹²⁰ while Elizabeth Boa focuses on Özdamar's narrators' search for their 'lost language' and also looks at the readers' reactions.¹²¹ David Horrocks explores the 'search of a lost past' (in Ottoman Turkey) as a means of self-examination; this is effectively a process of 'collecting words to recollect the past'.¹²² Margaret Littler looks into the relationship between gender, language (and the reform of Turkish under Atatürk) and identity, and embodiment and sexual

¹¹⁷ Maike Ahrends, *Kaza Gecirmek: Having Accidents in Life-Identity Constructions Between Cultures: The Prose Texts by Aysel Özakin, Renan Demirkan, and Emine Sevgi Özdamar* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 2000) (= doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, 1999), pp. 16-21, 83-95, and 136-38.

¹¹⁸ Wierschke, *Schreiben als Selbstbehauptung*, pp. 12, 17, 160-65, 165, 168, and 163.

¹¹⁹ Kader Konuk, *Identitäten im Prozeß: Literatur von Autorinnen aus und in der Türkei in deutscher, englischer und türkischer Sprache*, Literaturwissenschaft in der Blauen Eule, 28 (Essen: Verlag Die Blaue Eule, 2001) (= doctoral thesis, Universität Paderborn, 1999), p. 84; "'Identitätssuche ist ein [sic!] private archäologische Graberei': Emine Sevgi Özdamars inszeniertes Sprechen", in *AufBrüche: Kulturelle Produktionen von Migrantinnen, Schwarzen und jüdischen Frauen in Deutschland*, ed. by Cathy S. Gelbin, Kader Konuk, and Peggy Piesche (Königstein/Taunus: Helmer, 1999), pp. 60-74; and 'Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei: Heim-at bei Emine Sevgi Özdamar', in *Kein Land in Sicht: Heimat – weiblich?*, ed. by Gisela Ecker (Munich: Fink, 1997), pp. 143-59 (p. 143).

¹²⁰ Stephanie Bird, *Women Writers and National Identity: Bachmann, Duden, Özdamar*, Cambridge Studies in German (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹²¹ Elizabeth Boa, 'Sprachenverkehr: Hybrides Schreiben in Werken von Özdamar, Özakin und Demirkan', in *Interkulturelle Konfiguration: Zur deutschsprachigen Erzählliteratur von Autoren nichtdeutscher Herkunft*, ed. by Mary Howard (Munich: Iudicium, 1997), pp. 115-51.

¹²² David Horrocks, 'In Search of a Lost Past: A Reading of Emine Sevgi Özdamar's Novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei, hat zwei Türen, aus einer kam ich rein, aus der anderen ging ich raus*', in *Turkish Culture in German Society Today*, ed. by David Horrocks and Eva Kolinsky, Culture and Society in Germany, 1 (Providence, RI: Berghahn, 1996), pp. 23-43 (p. 24).

difference.¹²³ Azade Seyhan points out the ‘metafictional tradition and magical [*sic*] realism’ in Özdamar’s work (the motive of storytelling as part of the narrator’s migratory experiences is also discussed by Maria E. Brunner¹²⁴). She also analyses ‘how language determines the reality of our experience, time (and history), space, and relationships’. She thus speaks of a ‘hybrid language’ as a ‘mode of survival’.¹²⁵ Sohelia Ghaussy explores Özdamar’s work in the light of her ‘nomadic language and “feminine writing”’.¹²⁶ A useful overview over Turkish migration to Germany and how it features in literature is provided by Sabine Fischer and Moray McGowan.¹²⁷

The extensive scholarship on V.S. Naipaul’s travel writing demonstrates a long-standing interest in Naipaul’s perception of the Other. Timothy Weiss analyses Naipaul’s work as something (still) written ‘on the margins’,¹²⁸ while Judith Levy explores the relationship between Naipaul’s displacement and autobiography, which has an effect on his perception of Islam.¹²⁹ Rob Nixon describes Naipaul’s attitude in a similar light: his colonial history has turned him into an assimilated English and judgmental writer who dismisses the post-colonial insecurity of the countries he visits.¹³⁰ Suman Gupta critically looks into Naipaul’s development from the observing writer of *Among the Believers* to the statemental writer of *Beyond*

¹²³ Margaret Littler, ‘Emine Sevgi Özdamar, “Mutter Zunge” and “Großvater Zunge” (1990)’, in Brigid Haines and Margaret Littler, *Contemporary Women’s Writing in German: Changing the Subject*, Oxford Studies in Modern European Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 118-39 (pp. 122-25 and pp. 129-30). See also her ‘Diasporic Identity in Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s *MutterZunge*’, in *Recasting German Identity: Culture, Politics, and Literature in the Berlin Republic*, ed. by Stuart Taberner and Frank Finlay (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), pp. 219-34.

¹²⁴ Maria E. Brunner, ‘Die Türkei, ein Mutterland – Deutschland, ein Bitterland? Emine Sevgi Özdamars Buch “Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei”’, *Info DaF*, 26.6 (December 1999), 556-65 (for example, p. 558).

¹²⁵ Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation*; ‘Geographies of Memory’, pp. 193-212; ‘Scheherazade’s Daughters: The Thousand and One Tales of Turkish-German Women Writers’, in *Writing New Identities: Gender, Nation, and Immigration in Contemporary Europe*, ed. by Gisela Brinker-Gabler and Sidonie Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 230-248 (p. 244); and ‘Lost in Translation: Re-Membering the Mother Tongue in Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*’, *German Quarterly*, 69.4 (Fall 1996), 414-26 (p. 420).

¹²⁶ Sohelia Ghaussy, ‘Das Vaterland verlassen: Nomadic Language and “Feminine Writing” in Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*’, *German Quarterly*, 72.1 (Winter 1999), 1-16.

¹²⁷ Sabine Fischer and Moray McGowan, ‘From *Pappkoffer* to Pluralism: On the Development of Migrant Writing in the German Federal Republic’, in *Turkish Culture in German Society Today* (see Horrocks, above), pp. 1-22.

¹²⁸ Timothy Weiss, *On the Margins: The Art of Exile in V.S. Naipaul* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992).

¹²⁹ Judith Levy, *V.S. Naipaul: Displacement and Autobiography* (New York: Garland, 1995).

¹³⁰ Rob Nixon, *London Calling: V.S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 45 and p. 130.

Belief,¹³¹ and similarly, Fawzia Mustafa relates Naipaul's 'bookishness', his aloofness, to Orientalist ideas of the non-Western world.¹³² Naipaul-criticism on his travels to non-Arab Muslim countries tends to be more negatively critical than the scholarship on his novels.

The critical work on Leila Aboulela is limited, and her novels and short stories have only recently aroused academic interest. Exceptions are a comparative article by Geoffrey Nash, and newspaper articles, for example by Ferial J. Ghazoul, which focuses on the Islamic element of her writing.¹³³ Furthermore, some interviews and reviews of Aboulela's books have been published. Interviews and reviews also make up the secondary material for Monica Ali and Ilija Trojanow.

The scholarship on Hanif Kureishi is still increasing. Ruvani Ranasinha focuses on the 'matter of belonging', and the notion of ex- and inclusion (the relationship between community and the individual) among young British Muslims. He also points out that 'Kureishi *invents* a polarity between Islamic fundamentalism and detached liberal individualism or secularism'. He thinks *The Black Album* is a 'too monolithic portrait of Muslims', or even a caricature.¹³⁴ Kenneth C. Kaleta regards Kureishi's work as part of the English literary tradition: according to him, Kureishi's stories create 'a new national identity' in the light of 1980s-Thatcherism. He also puts great emphasis on Kureishi's exploration of the provisionality of love and life. For him, *The Black Album* 'openly questions religion in its depiction of conflict between eastern religious tradition and western progressive philosophy'.¹³⁵ Bart Moore-Gilbert dwells on depictions of the city and popular culture, sexuality (the 'Oriental male'), and notions of Englishness based on Britain's colonial past when examining *The Black Album*. He reads the short story 'My Son the Fanatic' as a rebellion against parents, and regards 'hybridity as a lifestyle, rather than political

¹³¹ Suman Gupta, *V.S. Naipaul, Writers and Their Work* (Plymouth: Northcote House in association with the British Council, 1999), p. 66.

¹³² Fawzia Mustafa, *V.S. Naipaul*, Cambridge Studies in African and Caribbean Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 27.

¹³³ Geoffrey Nash, 'Re-siting Religion and Creating Feminised Space in the Fiction of Ahdaf Soueif and Leila Aboulela', *Wasafiri*, 35 (Spring 2002), 28-31, and Ferial J. Ghazoul, 'Halal Fiction', *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 12-18 July 2001 <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/542/bo4.htm>> [accessed 04 July 2006] (13 para.).

¹³⁴ Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, pp. 85-86, 88 (original emphasis), and 89.

¹³⁵ Kenneth C. Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi: Postcolonial Storyteller* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), pp. 1, 4, 137, 10, 14, 123, and 139.

resistance' in the context of Kureishi's work.¹³⁶ Roy Sommer, in turn, describes *The Black Album* as the 'prototype of the multicultural *Bildungsroman*'.¹³⁷

Feridun Zaimoğlu has long been in the limelight of German Turkish literary criticism. Tom Cheesman has done extensive research on German Turkish writing, mainly on Zaimoğlu and the authenticity and/or artificiality of his '*Kanak Sprak*' (the language that Zaimoğlu created for his interlocutors in his collection of 'protocols' with young German Turkish men and women in *Kanak Sprak* and *Koppstoff*), partly in the light of performance theory.¹³⁸ Sandra Hestermann describes Zaimoğlu's texts as hyphenated and alternative discourses of identity, whilst also drawing on German Turkish music.¹³⁹ There has been extensive linguistic scholarship on Zaimoğlu's '*Kanak Sprak*', mainly in connection with its literary texts: Yasemin Yildiz looks into the use of various languages in the texts collected in *Kanak Sprak*.¹⁴⁰ Dirk Skiba describes Zaimoğlu's writing as 'literalisierte Hybridität' ('literalized hybridity'), thus drawing attention to Zaimoğlu's textualization of the performativity of difference and anti-assimilation.¹⁴¹

In the context of Zaimoğlu's texts, notions of race, subcultures, and masculinity come into play: Stuart Hall's and Tony Jefferson's edited volume

¹³⁶ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, Contemporary World Writers (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 123, 129, 131, 166, and 209.

¹³⁷ Roy Sommer, *Fictions of Migration: Ein Beitrag zur Theorie und Gattungsgeschichte des zeitgenössischen interkulturellen Romans in Großbritannien*, ELK (Studien zur Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft) / ELCH (Studies in English and Cultural History), 1 (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2001) (= Gießen, University, PhD thesis), p. 114: 'Prototyp des multikulturellen Bildungsromans'.

¹³⁸ For example, Tom Cheesman, 'Akçam – Zaimoğlu – "Kanak Attak": Turkish Lives and Letters in German', *German Life and Letters*, 55.2 (April 2002), 180-195.

¹³⁹ Sandra Hestermann, 'The German-Turkish Diaspora and Multicultural German Identity: Hyphenated and Alternative Discourses of Identity in the Works of Zafer Şenocak and Feridun Zaimoğlu', in *Diaspora and Multiculturalism: Common Traditions and New Developments*, ed. by Monika Fludernik, Crosscultures: Readings in Post/Colonial Literatures in English, 66 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 329-73.

¹⁴⁰ Yasemin Yildiz, 'Critically "*Kanak*": A Reimagining of German Culture', in *Globalization and the Future of German*. With a select Bibliography, ed. by Andreas Gardt and Bernd Hüppauf (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004), pp. 319-40. See also Carol W. Pfaff, '"Kanaken in Alemannistan": Feridun Zaimoglu's Representation of Migrant Language', in *Sprachgrenzen überspringen: Sprachliche Hybridität und polykulturelles Selbstverständnis*, Studien zur deutschen Sprache: Forschungen des Instituts für deutsche Sprache, 32 (Tübingen: Narr, 2005), pp. 195-225.

¹⁴¹ Dirk Skiba, 'Ethnolektale und literalisierte Hybridität in Feridun Zaimoglu's *Kanak Sprak*', in *Migrationsliteratur: Schreibweisen einer interkulturellen Moderne*, ed. by Klaus Schenk, Almut Todorow, and Milan Tvdik, with the cooperation of Nikoletta Enzmann (Tübingen: Francke, 2004), pp. 183-304. Kein Nghi Ha also explores the hybridity of language and the interrelation between performativity and masculinity in *Ethnizität und Migration*, Einstiege, 9 (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1999).

Resistance Through Rituals explores forms of community and multiculturalism as an influence on youth subcultures in post-war Britain.¹⁴² Examinations in British youth subcultures also help analyse German subcultures as they are depicted in transcultural writing. bell hooks' discussion of black masculinity contributes to this understanding.¹⁴³ The concept of 'race' has been thoroughly explored by Paul Gilroy. His work represents some of the most influential analysis of 'blackness' in a postcolonial context.¹⁴⁴ More specifically Murat Güngör and Hannes Loh examine the problematic concept 'Kanak'. They look into popular culture such as HipHop and its political value as a re-evaluation of history and memory.¹⁴⁵ Ruth Mayer's and Mark Terkessidis' research into multiculturalism, popular culture, and cultural studies have also influenced my reading of Zaimoğlu's texts. They perceive culture as a dynamic process which is constantly redefined according to changing power relations; this is what Zaimoğlu's protagonists experience.¹⁴⁶ Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, and Ayse Caglar have contributed to this kind of research by looking more closely into women and subculture.¹⁴⁷

Spivak formulates the relationship between comparative literature and Islam as follows:

¹⁴² Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (London: Routledge, 1993 [2000 printing]; first publ. as *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, 7/8 (Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1975)).

¹⁴³ bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 2004), and 'doing it for daddy: black masculinity in the mainstream', in *reel to real: race, sex, and class at the movies* (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 83-91.

¹⁴⁴ Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*, with a new Introduction by the author, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge, 2002 [1987]), and *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

¹⁴⁵ Murat Güngör and Hannes Loh, *Fear of a Kanak Planet: HipHop zwischen Weltkultur und Nazi-Rap* (Höfen: Hannibal. 2002), pp. 27-32 and pp. 58-59.

¹⁴⁶ Ruth Mayer and Mark Terkessidis, 'Retuschierte Bilder: Multikulturalismus, Populärkultur und Cultural Studies: Eine Einführung', in *Globalkolorit: Multikulturalismus und Populärkultur* (see Zaimoglu, above), pp. 7-23 (particularly p. 18).

¹⁴⁷ Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, 'Girls and Subcultures: An Exploration', in *Resistance Through Rituals* (see Hall and Jefferson, above), pp. 209-22, and Ayse Caglar, 'Management kultureller Vielfalt: Deutsch-türkischer Hip-Hop, Rap und Türktop in Berlin', in *Geschlecht und Globalisierung: Ein kulturwissenschaftlicher Streifzug durch transnationale Räume, Aktuelle Frauenforschung*, ed. by Sabine Hess and Ramona Lenz (Königstein/Taunus: Helmer, 2001), pp. 221-41.

The range and diversity of the Islamic diaspora is immense. It is altogether appropriate that Comparative Literature should undo the politically monolithized view of Islam that rules the globe today, without compromising the strong unifying ideology potentially alive in that particular cultural formation.¹⁴⁸

This correlates with my intent to discuss Islam in the context of movement (travel and migration) as a determinant factor of Muslim identity. Islam has acquired a primarily negative image in the Western world. It has also become a popular theme in literature; the sheer volume of publications speaks for itself.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, Malak has observed that in postcolonialism there is a 'resistance to engage with religion as a key category pertinent to the debate about contemporary neo-colonial reality'.¹⁵⁰ This thesis tries to work against this resistance.

I have a comparative approach to the texts and assess similarities and differences between German- and English-language writers. Although Islam has long arrived in Europe, something which is also reflected in (contemporary) transcultural writing, academic interest in representations of Islam in this literature has only recently flourished.¹⁵¹ The comparison of the texts gives a wider and worthwhile view on Islam-related aspects and a European perspective on the 'Question of Islam'. This thesis makes explicit that Islam *is* part of Europe and its literatures.

(4)

The first chapter, 'Moving with Islam', deals with migration and arrival writing, and the first generation of migrants in particular. Current public interests such as multiculturalism serve as starting point. The chapter explores what happens with Islam when it travels, what role(s) Islam can occupy, and whether there are

¹⁴⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, The Wellek Library Lectures in Critical Theory (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 87.

¹⁴⁹ The conclusion to this thesis will give an outlook to more current publications to demonstrate the ongoing interest in Muslim transcultural writing.

¹⁵⁰ Malak, *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English*, p. 17.

¹⁵¹ For example, two conferences on the perceptions of Islam in European literature have recently been held: 'German Encounters with Islam' (National University of Ireland, Maynooth; March 2007), and 'Neue westöstliche Divane: Die Begegnung mit der islamischen Welt in der zeitgenössischen europäischen Literatur' (University of Porto; May 2007).

differences between the perceptions of migration among the generations. The central texts are Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*. I focus on where and how cultural translation processes, as interactions between cultures as well as between the characters' past/heritage and their present, take place. I analyse the texts' contrasting constructions of 'home': *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* – as the book's title suggests – portrays a life constantly on the move. The text builds on the hybridity in the protagonist's life and on Turkey's heterogeneity. In contrast, the title *Brick Lane* suggests a fixed place, an established Bangladeshi diaspora with the dream of return to Bangladesh. The book focuses on the tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims, and the redefinitions of religious practices as cultural translation processes. Furthermore, I analyse the interaction between language and culture: in *Das Leben ist Karawanserei*, this is expressed in the relationship between Arabic and Turkish which resembles translation processes, and in *Brick Lane* this is the relationship between Bengali and English. I also take a closer look at gender by analysing the subversions of traditional roles, and assess women as the providers of stability and effectively the more successful migrants as they are more open to new definitions of home than men. (Aboulela specifically addresses this aspect in her writing, discussed later.) Overall, I demonstrate how translation processes work during the migration processes depicted in the novels and how that leads to the redefinition of the characters' identities and their surroundings.

The second chapter, 'Travelling to Islam', is concerned with the experience of Islam from a pilgrim's and visitor's perspective. It looks into both travelling to Islam's origin, to its 'heart' (Mecca and Medina) and to the places where it is lived such as its 'peripheries' (here, non-Arab Muslim countries). This chapter compares these different ways of movement – traditional and metaphorical pilgrimages – in Ilija Trojanow's *Zu den Heiligen Quellen des Islam*, and V.S. Naipaul's *Among the Believers* and *Beyond Belief*. I ask how significant travelling and, as a result of that, the immediate interaction with Islam are for the traveller's identity, its negotiation and possible transformation. Firstly, I examine the writers' objectives. Naipaul and Trojanow have different approaches to travelling and perceiving the world: Naipaul visits and re-visits non-Arab Muslim countries with a particular intention. He travels to follow up the 'theme of conversion'. His journeys are journeys of inquiry and

confirmation of his construction of Islam as a destructive force. Trojanow pays thorough attention to the significance of Mecca as the centre of Muslim worship. He also explains the magnitude and the tradition of the hajj for every Muslim. I then move on to the travel writer and his 'subjects': Naipaul acts as a translator and anthropologist, yet needs 'natives' to translate the foreign into a comprehensible language for him. In contrast, Trojanow is on a search for an emotional understanding of Islam. The next section deals with the interaction between travelling and writing: Naipaul is first a writer, then a traveller; Trojanow seems to be first a traveller, then a writer, who contributes to the tradition of hajj writing. The second part of the chapter focuses on the originality and diversity of Islam. It includes a consideration of the question of Islam's origin, and examines the relationship between individuality and the community of believers, the *umma*: for Naipaul, Islam – literally – means 'submission' and 'facelessness', an unreflecting urge to refer back to the past, whereas Trojanow celebrates the unifying force of Islam and its diversity at its roots. Both writers create their own, different Islams: Trojanow's Islam is a lived one, whereas Naipaul's perception of Islam in non-Arab Muslim countries feeds into his 'idea Islam'.

The subsequent chapters look into notions of 'having arrived' in the country of residence, and changes between the generations. They also deal with notions of gender. Chapter 3, 'Islam, "Difference", and Masculinity', focuses on the portrayal of young male Muslims in Feridun Zaimoğlu's *Kanak Sprak* and Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album*. I am particularly interested in 'Islam at the margins of society'. I compare Zaimoğlu's protocols of interviews with German Turks to Kureishi's novel, which explores fundamentalism among young British Muslims. These fundamental tendencies are partly due to the previous feminization of the 'Oriental', which put masculinity under threat. I examine the role of Islam as a tool for the identification of/as a Muslim man: here, Islam serves as something of their own. These young Muslim men are against their exoticization and homogenization as one group, and for their differentiation from the West. Three points are at the centre of the discussion of negotiating masculinity: firstly, the notion of belonging and creating new spaces for the development of a new kind of 'Muslim masculinity', which includes the opposition to the mainstream and linguistic subversion, the discovery and re-

appropriation of religion, and the living of an urban Muslim masculinity; secondly, the idea that these 'new' identities are exclusive and anti-Western, and a questioning and negotiating of authenticity; and, thirdly, the redefinition of community and family. Masculinity is explored as performance in this context. This discussion is based on Butler's theory of gender performativity. As these young Muslims negotiate their identities by way of playing and subverting various roles, they challenge socially established ways of being a foreign man, primarily by resisting assimilation. I look into how religion and sexuality, particularly in an Orient-West relationship, can become part of this performative act. These performances enable these young Muslim men to reclaim their bodies and voices.

Chapter 4 looks into the relationship between 'Islam, Writing, and Gender' in Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *MutterZunge*, Feridun Zaimoğlu's *Koppstoff*, and Leila Aboulela's *The Translator* and *Minaret*. This chapter explores female perspectives from the 'margins of society'. These books are about negotiations of Muslim women's identities, yet their approaches are significantly different: Aboulela's protagonists find (back) to Islam in order to gain stability and the 'true' voice of a Muslim. Here, I address notions of Islamic feminism, a feminism that calls for Islam as gender-equal religion. In contrast, Özdamar's narrator and Zaimoğlu's interviewees create linguistic spaces of subversion and power where they can explore their femininity. I then focus on how the writers either use or create language (*the* powerful tool of the migrant woman) to carve out representations of Muslim femininity. Butler's analysis of performativity, particularly in relation to the protagonists' performing roles and resistance, comes into play again. Özdamar describes notions of the transcultural writer's displacement and the implications of leading a peripatetic life. Zaimoğlu lets his *Kanakas* express their strength through language: it is *the* site of their struggle for acceptance as 'marginal Germans' who influence German culture. Aboulela uses English as the language of her writing and employs the significance of Arabic (the original language of Islam) as a metaphor for her protagonists' interpersonal relationships in order to transfer her idea of an Islam based on choice to her readers. My analysis of this chapter's texts emphasizes the writers' agendas, since they come to the fore particularly in these texts: Özdamar wishes to uncover the interaction between Turkish (her mother tongue) and Arabic

(her cultural and religious roots) in order to become a German Turkish migrant writer; Zaimoğlu seems to pursue his male self-portrayal through textualizing interviews with young German Turkish women; and Aboulela aims at showing Islam's power for a Muslim woman's identification. This chapter builds a bridge to the first chapter by examining female agency and literary representations of the success of women (post-)migrants.

The Conclusion, 'Islam and Its Audience', puts Muslim migrant writers in relation to the West and explores the meaning of Islam in the Western self-perception. I provide an outlook to recently published texts and to cultural and societal trends regarding the perceptions of Islam and the Muslim world.

(5)

The thesis will address the following questions, whilst attempting to account for the similarities and differences between German and English transcultural writing (regarding the textual and stylistic approaches to Islam):

What kind of Islams are evoked, when Islam travels or is visited? Islam is often subject to change in new surroundings, and the cultural context plays a significant role in the shaping of Islam as both religion and culture. Islam springs from Arabia, which is regarded as its original homeland, yet migrations to non-Arab areas have always shaped this religion, and different forms of Islam have become generic in foreign environments. Yet these differences are generally not perceived by the West. Furthermore, the third generation has increasingly shaped German and British Muslim identity. How is this identity different to other Muslim identities?

As Islam is transported into a predominantly non-Muslim environment in the majority of the selected texts, it needs to be asked what role(s) Islam plays or takes on in mainly secularized societies. This notion also entails the following questions: What does it mean to live as a Muslim in a non-Muslim environment? Do 'host' and 'migrant' cultures interact and how? What does the relationship between secularism and religiosity look like in this context? This question relates to the significance of places and local homes, and how they are created under the condition of

displacement. Living Islam in a non-Muslim environment can also entail the increased learning about one's religion.

Furthermore, I am interested in the question whether Islam is differently perceived in travel and migrant writing, by women and men and by different generations, and why. I also ask questions regarding the linguistic experience of the migrant in this light. What role do various languages play: how significant is Arabic as the language of Islam for the characters? How are migrants' new languages (here, German and English) appropriated and re-shaped by their linguistic heritage such as Turkish, Bangladeshi, or Urdu? How do the writers put across their characters' (and possibly their own) linguistic migration on paper?

Finally, I shall ask what these textualizations of Islam and their reception might say about contemporary German and English literature, culture and society. My thesis aims at contributing to a trans-European understanding of Islam as a religion and culture with various meanings and interpretations.

1 Moving with Islam¹

Islam, Migration, and Home: Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*

This chapter examines migration writing from the perspective of the first generation of migrants. It analyses the relationship between Islam and movement, and the various role(s) it can occupy for different generations, and for men and women. I thereby focus on cultural translation processes in relation to the texts' contrasting constructions of home. This particularly concerns the point of view of the women, who – as it will become clear – seem the effectively more successful migrants.

1.1 Novels of Migration and Cultural Translation

Novels such as Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei / hat zwei Türen / aus einer kam ich rein / aus der anderen ging ich raus* (1992)² and Monica

¹ Earlier versions of parts of this chapter were published as “‘Was deutsch ist, bestimmen wir’”: Definitions of (Turkish-)Germanness in Feridun Zaimoğlu's *Kanak Sprak* and *Koppstoff*, *Focus on German Studies*, 14 (2007), 14 (2007), 19-35, and as “‘Migrating Words’: Emine Sevgi Özdamar's Approach to Gaining and Owning Language”, in *When 'Abroad' Becomes 'Home': The Cultural Consequences of Migration*, Proceedings to the 10th Annual International Ege University Cultural Studies Symposium, ed. by Günseli Sönmez İşçi, Dilek Direnç, and Gülden Hatipoğlu (Bornova-İzmir: Ege University Press, 2007), pp. 273-84.

Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003)³ represent literature of migration, a literature whose protagonists move between countries, cultures, and languages. In their texts, migrant writers discuss a diversity of processes that negotiate identities between the places from where migrants come and to where they go – or currently live – and related notions such as 'home'. These processes take place in transitional spaces where the migrant translates and interprets cultures. I define migration as the movement of gradual arrival, that is, the process of settling in and the familiarization with a new country. It does not lead back to the place of departure. Finding a new place to live depends on processes of coming-to-terms with unfamiliar phenomena that concern the new country as well as the migrant him/herself.

Processes of negotiation and translation play a significant role in Özdamar's and Ali's works. The writers have diverse backgrounds: Özdamar was born in Turkey where she frequently moved around, but has lived first as a *Gastarbeiterin* then as an actor, theatre director, and writer in Germany for almost forty years, whereas Ali was raised in Britain. The two writers address the notion of finding and defining a home, and an identity, in the new environment of Turkey then Germany, and in Britain respectively. In their novels, they describe the processes of self-discovery in the country of residence as a long and often exhausting experience.

Cultural translation plays a vital role in processes of arriving. I define cultural translation not as a coming-to-terms with the foreign or unknown by simply applying familiar knowledge systems and therefore being able to capture the unknown. This is what ethnographers or travel writers (such as V.S. Naipaul in his travel accounts on non-Arab Muslim countries, to be analysed in the following chapter) have done. I perceive cultural translation as a learning process by which the migrant characters in the novels translate the unknown or unfamiliar into something understandable. I thereby appropriate the concept of linguistic translation to the translation between

² Emine Sevgi Özdamar, *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei / hat zwei Türen / aus einer kam ich rein / aus der anderen ging ich raus: Roman*, KiWi, 334, 5th edn (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2003 [1992]), henceforth abbreviated to '*Karawanserei*'; further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

Translations taken from Emine Sevgi Özdamar, *Life Is a Caravanserai Has Two Doors I Came In One I Went Out the Other*, trans. by Luise von Flotow, Middlesex University World Literature Series (London: Middlesex University Press, 2000), henceforth abbreviated to '*Caravanserai*'; further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text and footnotes.

³ Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* (London: Black Swan, 2004 [2003]), henceforth abbreviated to '*Lane*'; further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

cultures, and borrow the idea from Walter Benjamin that 'in a translation, something other than reproduction of meaning' is to be aimed at.⁴ Translation transfers not only signifiers of a language but also whole cultural concepts. The act of translation makes the interrelation between languages and cultures visible.⁵ Furthermore, according to Benjamin, translation is a continuation of the original and transforms it retrospectively.⁶ As the analysis of the novels will show, migration and subsequent cultural translation influence both the migrant's culture and the 'host' culture. This is a mutual transformation process.

I regard translation as – in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's words – 'the most intimate act of reading'.⁷ The prerequisite of this 'reading' of cultures has, then, to be openness to the Other as well as openness to permitting change in the Self. Yet migrants often employ their 'original' culture, including religion, as a separating device. This idea hints at translation as a way of establishing difference as a means of defining identity. As in linguistic translations, cultural translation processes are based on choices and decisions on what is to be translated and how, which can establish similarities as well as differences. This observation holds especially true for religion. As Spivak points out, 'Western feminists have not so far been aware of religion as a cultural instrument rather than a mark of cultural difference'.⁸ Yet religion is a major component in the transformation process of the identities of a number of Muslim migrants, and women in particular, which will become apparent in the analysis of the novels.

The migrant's identity is at the centre of translation processes. Identity is not an essential or fixed entity that is defined and natural. In fact, migration and the translation processes it entails emphasize the performative⁹ and relational¹⁰ side of

⁴ Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', pp. 253-63 (pp. 259).

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 255.

⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 253-54.

⁷ Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation', pp. 177-200 (p. 181).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁹ See Judith Butler's analysis of performativity as a major factor in the construction of identity in, for example, *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*. This aspect is of great significance in relation to Muslim masculinity and femininity to be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

¹⁰ See Jacques Lacan's concept of the construction of identity in relation to others, as discussed in his *Écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966). Lacan's concept 'introduces the idea of difference into the process of identity construction. [...] Identity is not something fixed and stable, it is a *process* that will never lead to completion' (Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 161-62; original emphasis).

identity, and thus also bring the historical, constructed nature of identity to the fore. A migrant's identity is largely constructed through the interaction with new discourses (such as languages, cultures, customs) and surroundings. In the context of the novels discussed here, I perceive the migrant's identity as a mixture of his/her constant personal development and choice: Özdamar's and Ali's migrants face frequently changing circumstances (in *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*) and new, supposedly fixed circumstances (in *Brick Lane*). Their protagonists have to challenge established aspects of their identities and let new cultures influence them. This transformation depends, however, on what they choose to incorporate into their ever-changing identity, at least to some extent. Expectations from representatives of the migrants' 'home' cultures and (gender) roles also contribute to the establishing of their identity and might limit their openness to the new environment. Furthermore, identity is constructed in the face of the Other,¹¹ which, for a number of characters in the novels, is represented by the West. The Other is used to create and maintain difference. In whatever way the novels' characters perceive themselves, their identity is an 'identity in transformation',¹² an ongoing identification rather than identity as such.¹³ This concept of identity is not limited to migrants, yet their physical movements reinforce identity transformation processes.

Critics often perceive the notion of cultural translation as controversial. As Michaela Wolf points out,

this claim [that cultures can be 'translated'; F.M.] is problematic not only because it presupposes the existence of stable cultural units which can be transferred between an 'original' and a 'target' culture, but also because in the final analysis such a translation turns out to be an ethnographic operation.¹⁴

I interpret a migrant's coming-to-terms with his/her new surroundings as an 'ethnographic operation', but one which is different to that of a travel writer's who

¹¹ This idea is of great significance in postcolonial criticism, which I address throughout this thesis.

¹² Cf. Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, p. 24: 'Our sense of being, of identity and language, is experienced and extrapolated from movement [...], the "I" is constantly being formed and reformed in such movement in the world'.

¹³ Cf. Bhabha, in 'The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp. 207-21 (pp. 211).

¹⁴ Wolf, 'Culture as Translation', pp. 180-92 (p. 182).

visits and then leaves a country. Özdamar and Ali create 'alternative ethnographers': their protagonists are alertly watching and examining their surroundings, yet without occupying the privileged position of being able to return to a comfortable home. Migrants might perceive the unfamiliar with astonished eyes, but, unlike 'travellers of leisure', they are forced to accept and incorporate it into their new version of home, or else they will feel excluded. However, their translations are initially a one-way operation: at the beginning, they only know their 'language' which they brought with them. They have to base their translation process, the making sense of the new, on guessing and finding a meaning while simultaneously learning the signifiers of the new 'language'. Wolf assumes that 'meanings are no longer perceived as being roughly the same across different cultures, but as something to be represented in codes and symbols linked to the translator's and the ethnographer's subjectivity and background'.¹⁵ This also applies to the novels' characters who are constantly deciphering everything new by initially trying to read it with their familiar codes. However, they soon have to learn that 'other' codes need to be considered as well, which then opens the space for genuine interaction with the new environment.

In her writing, Emine Sevgi Özdamar builds on the ambiguities caused by cultural translation. She deliberately undermines the idea of a homogeneous German culture by drawing upon her past and present. Her texts appear therefore as more controversial than 'multicultural' writing from Britain which enjoys great popularity as it increasingly becomes part of the literary mainstream. Özdamar creates a heterogeneous form of German literature by combining Western with supposedly 'Oriental traditions'; but she acknowledges the fact that both traditions cannot 'exist as something "pure"'.¹⁶ By questioning set definitions of what it means to be from a particular place, she explores her linguistic and cultural roots and 'routes',¹⁷ and creates transitional spaces where she lets the various voices that have made her a transcultural writer come to the fore.

Monica Ali primarily addresses the question of multiculturalism in her writing. Her background is different from Özdamar's: Ali was born in Bangladesh,

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 185.

¹⁶ See Ahrends, *Kaza Gecirmek*, p. 15: '[...] daß eine "reine" orientalische Tradition nicht existiert'.

¹⁷ Cf. Stuart Hall, 'Introduction: Who Needs "Identity"?', in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage, 1996), pp. 1-17 (p. 4): 'not the so-called return to roots but a coming-to-terms-with our "routes"'.

but grew up in Britain. She felt the impact of cultural outsiderdom at a younger age than Özdamar, who first came to Germany when she was nineteen. Her experience as someone with a 'different' background might suggest a more conscious way of dealing with the foreign. In her novel, Ali examines alternative ways of being British whereby migration becomes *the* factor for her characters' identity formation.

As Annette Wierschke puts it in a question directed to Özdamar: 'zu Hause ist für Sie im Zug oder auf dem Weg'.¹⁸ Her novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* depicts such a life 'on a train'.¹⁹ The caravanseraï, a motel-type inn for travellers in desert regions of Asia and North Africa that traditionally has no doors, serves as a metaphor for Özdamar's first novel. Not only does the book open and end with the protagonist's literal being-on-a-train, it also describes the metaphorical journey of a girl who finds herself between 'languages and cultures, Arabic Islam and Western-oriented Turkey',²⁰ and social constructions of gender. I read the novel as an unusual form of *Bildungsroman* that draws the picture of a heterogeneous and culturally diverse Turkey through the eyes of its child-I-narrator. According to David Horrocks, Özdamar's

young narrator's initiation into a particular culture and community consists to a large extent of [...] [a] linguistic education. [...] By virtue of its being written in German, and thus primarily for a German readership, it also – whether the author consciously intended it or not – functions as a novel of education and initiation in a second sense. [...] It takes the reader into an unfamiliar world and affords him or her the vicarious experience of learning something of its language, its customs and its values just as the young central character herself learns them.²¹

In her culturally and linguistically diverse environment (as found in the novel and associated with the author Özdamar), the narrator is trying to find a place and space where she can grow up. Özdamar presents 'home' as an unstable concept and as an

¹⁸ Wierschke in an interview with Özdamar, in *Schreiben als Selbstbehauptung*, p. 259: 'for you to be at home means to be on a train or on the way'.

¹⁹ See Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation*, p. 142: 'The title of the book is a Turkish proverb. Caravansaries were large inns built around courtyards to accommodate caravans traveling on the long commerce routes through the Middle East and Asia. The proverb defines an individual life both as a brief sojourn on earth and a station of an infinite journey. It suggests parallels both with Özdamar's life and the history she narrates'.

²⁰ Fischer and McGowan, 'From *Pappkoffer* to Pluralism', pp. 1-22 (p. 17).

²¹ Horrocks, 'In Search of a Lost Past', pp. 23-43 (p. 27).

accumulation of moments rather than as a comforting wholeness.²² Her narrator deliberately maintains the role of the naïve yet intelligent observer. She is trying to make sense of her often confusing surroundings by translating the unfamiliar or abstractly familiar into her 'language' which enables her to search for her identity among cultures in Turkey and beyond.

The Other in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* refers to the secluded Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets in East London. Hardly interacting with the outside world, the majority of characters, especially the women, create their own version of home based on what they know from Bangladesh. Although certain aspects of British culture are incorporated into their everyday lives, these seem to remain alien and cannot provide any comfort in the lives of those trying to settle down in London. These migrants' version of home arises out of a longing for stability which apparently can only be found in traditions and religion. In an extreme form, this attitude leads to the absolute rejection of what surrounds them and opens a divide between the 'decadent' West and the 'good' Muslim world with its seemingly rigid customs that structure life. Islam thereby serves as a comforting item in an alien world that is only slowly becoming familiar.

Although Özdamar and Ali portray 'home' differently (constant movement versus stasis), they both assume that culture is 'a dynamic process',²³ subject to constant change and influence. Furthermore, culture is – in Homi K. Bhabha's terms – 'the locus of translation'.²⁴ Seen from Wolf's point of view, 'translation [is] also a place where cultures merge and create new spaces'.²⁵ Bhabha calls these spaces *Third Spaces* where migrants raise other, non-conventional voices and express linguistic and cultural diversity, heteroglossia and hybridity. However, hybridity 'is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures [...] in a dialectical play of "recognition"'.²⁶ Out of those persisting tensions migrants constantly redefine their identities as well as homes. According to Bhabha, 'it is the "inter" – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space – that carries the burden of

²² Cf. Konuk, *Identitäten im Prozeß*, p. 84.

²³ Wolf, 'Culture as Translation', pp. 180-92 (p. 186).

²⁴ Bhabha referred to in *ibid.*, p. 189.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, 'Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817', in *The Location of Culture* (see Bhabha, above), pp. 102-22 (pp. 113-14).

the meaning of culture'.²⁷ The 'inter' also 'uncovers relations of power inherent in any process of translation'.²⁸ For migrants, the 'host' culture seems to dominate the translation process, as this is the public culture they have to settle in. In their private lives, their own culture will probably play a more significant role. However, this power dynamics between cultures is changing, most obviously among generations and genders. The *in-between* is thus a temporal construction,²⁹ where cultures are constantly subject to new interpretations and negotiations. Doris Bachmann-Medick points out that 'cultures themselves do not appear as "original lifeworlds" but as translations in the sense that they are already the results of translation activities'.³⁰ In that sense, cultures seem to be translatable and function as a device of finding a place in a new environment.³¹ Translation is then a form of 're-articulation'³² of the old in the face of the new and vice versa.

In *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*, Özdamar explores spaces of cultural negotiation, construction, and translation. The novel's child-protagonist finds herself in places that make her aware of her position as an Other due to her hybrid position based on several languages, consciousnesses, and social roles. She is constantly interpreting for herself and negotiating between the different parts of her identity. Two major factors influence these processes: firstly the frequent house-moving of the narrator's family and, connected with this existence on the move, the different roles she has to adopt every time she arrives in a new place, and secondly her Arab Islamic heritage and its impact on women in particular. Similar observations hold true for *Brick Lane*. Whilst focusing on the Muslim Bangladeshi community in East London, Ali explores how migrants come to terms with being a cultural and religious Other. The following analysis of the novels reveals the authors' explorations of translation processes in order to show how their characters redefine themselves in new places and what the consequences of these reinterpretations are.

²⁷ Bhabha, 'The Commitment to Theory', pp. 19-39 (p. 38; original emphasis).

²⁸ Wolf, 'Culture as Translation', pp. 180-92 (p. 187).

²⁹ Cf. Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in *The Location of Culture* (see Bhabha, above), pp. 139-70 (p. 148).

³⁰ Bachmann-Medick, 'Einleitung: Übersetzung als Repräsentation fremder Kulturen', pp. 3-25 (p. 14), qtd. in Wolf, 'Culture as Translation', pp. 180-92 (p. 186); Wolf's translation.

³¹ I do not agree with Bhabha in this point, because, as he argues, 'the migrant culture of the "in-between", the minority position, dramatizes the activity of culture's untranslatability' (Homi K. Bhabha, 'How Newness Enters the World: Postmodern Space, Postcolonial Times and the Trials of Cultural Translation', in *The Location of Culture* (see Bhabha, above), pp. 212-35 (p. 224)).

³² Young, *Colonial Desire*, p. 13; Young refers to Bhabha here.

1.2 Moving and Settling

1.2.1 Creating a Place to Live

The theme of Özdamar's novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*, an 'inner migration',³³ is already introduced by the narrator in her sixteen-year-old mother's womb. They are on their way from Istanbul to Malatya in Anatolia, the place of her birth. Due to the father's constant unemployment and debts, the family – consisting of grandmother Ayşe, father Mustafa, mother Fatma, elder brother Ali, the girl-narrator, whose name the reader never learns, younger brother Orhan, and little sister Schwarze Rose (Black Rose) – are forced to move around Turkey. They stop in Istanbul, Yenişehir (where the narrator starts school), Bursa (where she enters puberty), Ankara and the outskirts of Ankara close to the steppe, and finally again Istanbul, from where she takes a train to Germany to start a new life as a *Gastarbeiterin*. Home as a form of stability is only provided by the family and their – partly Muslim and partly Western – customs and traditions.³⁴ Özdamar shows the closeness of the family within their peripatetic lifestyle already at the beginning of the novel:

Dem Tod gestohlen in Anatolien von einer himmelaugigen Frau namens Ayşe, saß ich vor einem Photographen, mit meinem Vater, meiner Mutter, meinem zwei Jahre älteren Bruder auf den Knien dieser himmelaugigen Frau, meiner Großmutter, Mutter meines Vaters aus Kapadokia, am Meer in İstanbul, ließ mich photographieren [...]. (*Karawanserei*, p. 15)³⁵

This first impression of the narrator's family is that of a traditional extended Muslim family whose bonds are extremely strong. However, there are other, more prominent factors than religion that define them as a family. Their migrations within Turkey make them more aware of their closeness as a family. They perceive customs and traditions derived from their country's heritage as by-products rather than as

³³ Brunner, 'Die Türkei, ein Mutterland', 556-65 (p. 562): 'Binnenmigration'.

³⁴ Cf. Wierschke, *Schreiben als Selbstbehauptung*, p. 183.

³⁵ 'Stolen away from death in Anatolia by a sky-eyed women named Ayşe, I sat facing a photographer with my father, my mother and my two year older brother on the lap of this sky-eyed women, my grandmother, the mother of my father from Kapadokia, at the sea in İstanbul, letting myself be photographed [...].' (*Caravanserai*, p. 6).

determining factors. However, Turkey officially has a different attitude towards Islam than other Muslim countries. With his westernizing reforms in the 1920s, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey and the first president of the Turkish Republic, forced a more liberal attitude towards religion and its outward symbols such as headscarves upon his people. Yet, on her family's journeys, the child-narrator discovers other ways of living that, by choice, are based on allegedly stable concepts such as religion.

Özdamar thus portrays Turkey as a heterogeneous place and explores differences between East and West Turkey, and between urban and rural life.³⁶ As Wierschke points out, 'Istanbul definiert sich in Abgrenzung zur ländlichen anatolischen Provinz. Istanbuler Werte fungieren als Standard, an denen Anatolien, seine Bevölkerung und Sprache gemessen wird. Als Negativ ist Anatolien genau das Gegenstück, genau "das Andere": das, was Istanbul nicht ist und nicht sein will.'³⁷ In this context, Anatolia is often associated with a more traditional lifestyle. (Interestingly, the majority of guest workers moving to Germany came from the countryside rather than bigger cities.) The narrator experiences this dichotomy when she enters school in Istanbul. As a child who was born in rural Anatolia and thus an outsider she is discriminated against and has to face prejudices that are based on her origin.

Ich ging in die Schule. Die Lehrerin fragte alle nach ihrem Namen und danach, wo sie geboren waren. Ich sagte: 'Ich bin in Anatolien in Malatya geboren.' Die Lehrerin sagte: 'Dann bist du Kurdin, du hast einen Schwanz an deinem Arsch.' Dann lachte sie, alle anderen lachten auch und nannten mich: 'Kurdin mit Schwanz.' Ab dann saß ich ganz hinten [...]. (*Karawanserei*, p. 37)³⁸

Not only is the narrator made to feel different by being laughed at, but she is also spatially divided from the other children who have learned to share the teacher's (and

³⁶ Cf. Wierschke, *Schreiben als Selbstbehauptung*, p. 184.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 184: 'Istanbul defines itself in opposition to the rural Anatolian countryside. Istanbul values function as the standard against which Anatolia, its population and language are measured. Anatolia as negative is exactly the counterpart, "the other" which Istanbul is not and does not want to be'.

³⁸ 'I started school. The teacher asked everyone for their name and where they were born. I said, "I was born in Anatolia, in Malatya." The teacher said, "Then you're a Kurd, you have a tail growing on your ass." She laughed, all the others laughed too, and called me "Kurd with a tail." From then on I sat at the back [...]. (*Caravanserai*, p. 23).

society's) prejudices. Yet this kind of education has a major influence on the narrator, and she begins to internalize this discrimination by increasingly perceiving her birth place Malatya as an 'alien' place ('Die Stadt war ein anderer Planet. Sie stand viel näher an der Sonne als İstanbul' (*Karawanserei*, p. 48)).³⁹ As part of this changing attitude towards her origin, she, and even more so her mother, yearns for acceptance in Istanbul, the modern metropolis, an aspiration reflected in the wish to speak 'pure' Turkish. However, the influence of her background seems to be stronger than she had imagined. An example of this inner dialectics is the change in the narrator's speech which triggers a change in her identity.⁴⁰ After a holiday with her grandfather in Malatya she returns to Istanbul speaking an 'impure' Turkish exemplified by the different pronunciation of the significant word 'mother':

Ich öffnete meine Arme und schrie: 'Mutter!' [...] Meine Mutter stand mir gegenüber, aber ich konnte sie nicht umarmen. Zwischen uns stand eine Mauer aus dem fremden Dialekt, den ich aus dieser anatolischen Stadt unter meiner Zunge mitgebracht hatte. Meine Mutter sagte: 'Sprich nicht so, du mußt wieder istanbultürkisch, sauberes Türkisch sprechen, verstehst du, in zwei Tagen fängt die Schule wieder an. Wenn du so anatolisch sprichst, werden alle zu dir Bauer sagen, verstehst du. So sprich doch istanbulisch.' Ich machte wieder meine Arme auf, sagte: 'Mutter-Anacuğum.' Meine Mutter sagte: 'Sag: Anneciğim! Nicht Anacuğum.' Ich sagte: 'Anacuğum.' [...] Die beiden Wörter fochten in der Mitte des Zimmers [...]. Meine Großmutter kam, sah dieses Fechten zwischen 'Anacuğum' und 'Anneciğim', sagte: 'İstanbuler Wörter lassen keinen süßen Geschmack auf der Zunge, die Wörter sind wie kranke Äste, sie zerbrechen hintereinander.' [...] Großmutter sagte: 'Ja, sie sagt Anagı', was auch in ihrem Dorfdialekt in Kapadokia 'Mutter' heißt. Ihre Anagı, meine Anacuğum standen nebeneinander gegenüber İstanbuler Anneciğim. [...] So mußte ich [...] Strafe zahlen. Für meine Wörter, die ich aus der Stadt, wo meine Mutter und ich geboren wurden, mitgebracht hatte. So schnitten mir İstanbuler Messer mein Anacuğum rasch zu Anneciğim. (*Karawanserei*, pp. 53-54)⁴¹

³⁹ 'The city was another planet. It was much closer to the sun than İstanbul' (*Caravanserai*, p. 32).

⁴⁰ Cf. Wierschke, *Schreiben als Selbstbehauptung*, p. 185.

⁴¹ 'I opened my arms and yelled, "Mother!" [...] My mother stood facing me, but I couldn't put my arms around her. Between us stood a wall made of the strange dialect I had brought back under my tongue from the Anatolian city. My mother said, "Don't talk like that, you have to speak İstanbul Turkish, clean Turkish, again, understand, school starts in two days. If you use that Anatolian dialect, they'll all call you peasant, understand? So speak İstanbul Turkish." I opened my arms again, said, "Mother-Anacuğum." My mother said, "Say Anneciğim! Not Anacuğum." I said, "Anacuğum." [...] The two words were locked in battle in the middle of the room [...]. My grandmother came, saw the sparring between "Anacuğum" and "Anneciğim", said, "İstanbul words don't leave a sweet taste on the tongue, the words are like diseased branches, they break one after the other." [...] Grandmother said, "Yes, she's saying Anagı," which in her Kapadokia village dialect also meant mother. Her Anagı



The differences in the pronunciation of the word 'mother' signal a distancing from her familial background, personified by her mother, yet not from her origin, symbolized by the Anatolian dialect she has adopted. This 'linguistic gulf' triggers the narrator's search for something else that is more in tune with herself.⁴² Her longing results in her ultimate departure from Turkey at the end of the novel. Yet this search is infused with confusion regarding other people's perceptions of her origin. In Yenişehir, for instance, she is seen as the intelligent girl from Istanbul. She thus experiences how perceptions along with people change as she grows up amidst different 'Turkeys', only to become an ever-changing person. Özdamar lets her protagonist personify 'home' as a concept that comprises of a variety of cultural, linguistic and religious influences, and is therefore constantly re-created: she is able to mix the different versions of Turkey, which she gets to know on her journeys, according to her desires and needs.

Özdamar demonstrates that Turkey is as diverse a place as its people are. The family serves as a comfort zone among the different 'Turkeys' they encounter when travelling around. Their bonds are, on the one hand, based on the 'possibility of [having] multiple identities',⁴³ yet, on the other, these possibilities also contribute to the narrator's separation from her familial origin. She creates a home for and within herself, a home which seems to be dependent simply on how she invites diverse items of Turkish cultures to contribute to her identity.

In *Brick Lane*, Ali portrays an immigrant family's life that, at first sight, does not seem to be based on cultural diversity, but rather on a longing for a home which is spatially situated elsewhere and belongs to the past. Consequently, out of this feeling of having lost their home, the majority of the novel's characters re-create their home, a Bangladeshi diaspora, in East London. According to Douglas Robinson,

and my Anacugum stood side by side across from the İstanbul Anneciğim. [...] By evening I'd paid three lira [...] in fines. For the words I brought back from the city where my mother and I were born. That's how İstanbul knives quickly trimmed my Anacugum to Anneciğim.' (*Caravanserai*, pp. 35-36).

⁴² Horrocks, 'In Search of a Lost Past', pp. 23-43 (p. 28).

⁴³ Wierschke, *Schreiben als Selbstbehauptung*, p. 186: 'Möglichkeit multipler Identitäten'.

'Diaspora' is a way of imagining border culture on a global scale, groups and individuals dealing with cultural differences on a daily basis, in the communities where they live and work, intermarrying, mixing cultures and races, growing up bilingual and trilingual and resisting (or succumbing to) pressures to become (or to pretend to become) monolingual. A diasporic culture is a global culture that is forever displaced, in exile, living among strangers that become the familiar characters of our homes and places of work.⁴⁴

The characters in *Brick Lane* predominantly live a displaced life and perceive Britain, or rather Tower Hamlets in East London, as an alien place. However, as they are constantly being made aware of their cultural differences, they start to reinvent this new home, London, according to their old home imported from Bangladesh. As a vast number of the population in Tower Hamlets is monolingual, yet in a different sense than Robinson describes – the women in particular tend to remain monocultural based on their Bangladeshi heritage –, their existence is determined by the 'going home syndrome' that reinforces their dislocation and sense of belonging elsewhere.

'This is another disease that afflicts us,' said the doctor. 'I call it the Going Home Syndrome. Do you know what that means?' He addressed himself to Nazneen.

She felt a heat on the back of her neck and formed words that did not leave her mouth.

'It is natural,' said Chanu. 'These people are basically peasants and they miss the land. The pull of the land is stronger even than the pull of blood.'

'And when they have saved enough they will get on an aeroplane and go?'

'They don't ever really leave home. Their bodies are here but their hearts are back there. And anyway, look how they live: just recreating the villages here.' (*Lane*, p. 32)

Not only does the belief in eventually returning to Bangladesh and the allegedly temporary recreation of the migrants' old lives in a new surrounding contribute to their separation from other communities, they also open a dichotomy between 'inside', the tower blocks as home, and 'outside', Brick Lane as part of the 'larger outside' London. This dichotomy is reinforced by the gender construction of the Muslim woman who is stereotypically confined to her home and does not venture to

⁴⁴ Robinson, *Translation and Empire*, p. 29.

leave her familiar surroundings. However, Ali challenges this stereotype by letting Nazneen, partly accidentally, partly intentionally, leave her familiar space.

Nazneen pulled the end of her sari over her head. [...] She walked until she reached the big crossroads and waited at the end of the kerb while the traffic roared from one direction and then the next. Twice she stepped into the road and drew back again. To get to the other side of the street without being hit by a car was like walking out in the monsoon and hoping to dodge the raindrops. A space opened before her. God is great, said Nazneen under her breath. She ran. (*Lane*, p. 54)

Her initially timid, then more courageous, crossing of the literal boundaries between inside and outside opens up a number of possibilities for Nazneen. She learns that 'home' does not need to be reduced to her flat and a longing for her old home – even though she associates the crossing of the road with the monsoon, which she is familiar with from Bangladesh –, but that there is a world outside her new home. This adventure also enables the writer Ali to question ideas related to a 'good', traditional (Muslim) way of life, and a 'bad', Western (non-religious) way of life. Still greatly attached to her religious identity – Nazneen interprets the opening of the space before her as God's help – she nonetheless experiences fragments of a life that is unlike her previous experiences and will contribute to a new understanding of 'home'.

This tension between Muslim and non-Muslim increasingly destabilizes the notion of any clear space that can be referred to as 'home'. With the appearance of Karim, Nazneen is confused as to what 'right' behaviour is. This confusion is intensified by the fact that Karim gradually turns into an 'Islamic fundamentalist'. Being a responsible wife and mother, Nazneen feels torn not only between her family and her lover, but also between what is right in God's eyes and what is to be rejected.

She was back on the tightrope that stretched between her husband and children, and this time the wind was high and tormenting.

And there was Karim.

The horror came to her now. [...]

'God sees everything. He knows every hair on your head.' Amma squatted on her haunches in the corner [...]. (*Lane*, pp. 321-22)

For Nazneen, God is always present as an omniscient entity. This knowledge is based on how she was brought up, which is intensified by her mother's omnipresence in her life. She is almost haunting her. Thus, the place where they live, their home, is determined by what the family brought with them from Bangladesh – in terms of culture and religious upbringing. Religion is an entity that provides stability in this, especially for Nazneen, confusing world.

She picked up the Holy Qur'an from the high shelf that Chanu, under duress, had especially built. She made her intention as fervently as possible, seeking refuge from Satan with fists clenched and fingernails digging into her palms. Then she selected a page at random and began to read.

To God belongs all that the heavens and the earth contain. We exhort you [...] to fear God. [...] God is self-sufficient and worthy of praise.

The words calmed her stomach and she was pleased. [...] She was composed. Nothing could bother her. Only God, if he chose to. [...] How would it sound in Arabic? More lovely even than in Bengali, she supposed, for those were the actual words of God. (*Lane*, pp. 19-20; original emphasis)

Islam serves as a calming device for Nazneen, who frequently takes refuge in reading the Qur'an. Chanu does not seem to feel the need for religion. Although he built a shelf especially for the Holy Book, he built it 'under duress'. Religion is a predominantly unconscious part of his everyday life, which also takes place outside the flat, and does not have the same calming effect for him as it has for his wife. She, who does not have a life beyond the immediate surroundings of her flat, seems to be the driving force behind the recapturing of religion as a visible comfort zone. This is one of the few occasions when she is the more active part of the couple, especially at the beginning of their marriage. As she longs for comfort, she, with the help of Chanu, turns the Qur'an, which is placed on the shelf, into a touchable home. Yet 'home' is also defined on another, indirect level: Arabic, the original language of the Qur'an, is comforting, maybe also precisely because Nazneen is familiar with it, yet does not understand it. Ali therefore portrays 'home' as something that not necessarily has to be fully grasped: unfamiliar elements, such as the Arabic language, of an otherwise familiar terrain, such as Islam, can also leave gaps of understanding that nevertheless contribute to a calming idea of 'home'.

Both Özdamar and Ali show that migration challenges established perceptions of 'home': with the arrival in a new country at the latest, imported cultural and religious values are challenged by new cultures and their interpretations of religion. Migrants are forced to re-examine their perceptions which contributes to a new understanding of 'home'. The next section examines the changing nature of culture, including religion, and language as part of migration.

1.2.2 Explorations in Language and Culture

Language is one of the dominant factors for negotiating a migrant's identity. A migrant's mother tongue can become an object of, on the one hand, deliberate differentiation from the Other (the country migrated to) and, on the other, a comforting inclusion of people from the same country in the foreign environment. For Muslim migrants, Arabic plays an additionally significant role: this language gives access to their religion and other parts of the Muslim world, and contributes to a culturally familiar home.

Özdamar's narrator pays particular attention to Arabic as part of her Islamic heritage, but views it primarily as a means of self-exploration and not differentiation. Language is represented 'as an expression of the "foreign" and means of finding one's identity'.⁴⁵ Özdamar primarily expresses the foreign nature of Arabic in relation to religion. Living in an officially secular country (Turkey), the narrator encounters Islam foremost through her grandparents yet also through formal instruction. Although she has contact with texts and rituals that are based on Arabic, they remain unconsciously internalized until much later in her life. She thus finds herself caught in two dichotomies from an early age: firstly, she becomes familiar with Arabic to some extent, yet does not actually understand the language, and, secondly, she experiences both her grandparents' religiosity and her parents' secularism. Her mother, who grew up under the direct influence of Atatürk's reforms and also supports the Republicans, sends her children to Qur'an lessons nonetheless.

⁴⁵ Wierschke, *Schreiben als Selbstbehauptung*, p. 163: 'Sprache [ist] gleichzeitig Ausdruck von Fremdheit und Mittel zur Identitätsfindung'.

Meine Mutter schicke mich und meinen Bruder Ali zur Moschee zum Koranunterricht. Sie sagte, arabische Schrift muß man lernen, um Allahs Gedanken aus dem Koran zu lesen. Meine Mutter selbst konnte nicht die arabische Schrift lesen und schreiben. [...] Ich kannte auch nur lateinische Buchstaben, aber mein Großvater konnte nicht mit lateinischen Buchstaben schreiben. Er konnte in arabischer Schrift schreiben. Wenn meine Großmutter schreiben und lesen gelernt hätte, könnte sie auch nur in arabischer Schrift schreiben. Ich dachte, wenn also mein Großvater Ahmet und meine Großmutter Ayşe stumme und taube Menschen wären und uns nur mit Schrift etwas erzählen könnten, hätte ich sie nie gekannt. So hätte ich heute keine Großmutter, Großvater. (*Karawanserei*, p. 69)⁴⁶

In this example, the narrator clearly connects the Arabic script with Turkey's past and with her grandparents as representatives of it, who lead a more traditional, religious life. On this personal level, the text also criticizes Atatürk's westernizing reforms that denied Turkey's heterogeneity: the narrator would not have a personal history if her grandparents were not able to communicate it to her. This should be read with the knowledge that until the mid-1920s Turkish was written in Arabic script. Since Atatürk's westernizing reforms Turkish has been written in Latin script, which meant a break with the literary and cultural history recorded in Arabic script.

Interestingly, her mother gives religious reasons for her decision to send her children to the Qur'an lessons: she wants them to be able to 'read Allah's thoughts'. However, in the light of the whole novel, which reveals the narrator's parents as supporters of the Republicans, I read the mother's explanation as a way of giving a simple, rather than a complicated reason based on complex ideas of a country's past and loss to avoid her children's questions. The narrator sees through her mother's explanation, and comments on Turkey's change of alphabet and its influence on her relationship with her grandparents. The text does not state clearly whether the mother simply conforms to pressure to instruct her children in religion: the family lives in one of Turkey's religious centres, the city of Yenisehir, at this point, and the desire to send the children to the Qur'an lessons dwindles when they move to bigger and more

⁴⁶ 'My mother sent me and my brother Ali to the mosque for instruction in the Koran. She said you have to learn Arabic script to read Allah's thoughts in the Koran. My mother couldn't read or write Arabic script herself. [...] I only knew Latin letters of the alphabet but my grandfather could not write with Latin letters. He knew how to write in Arabic. If my grandmother had learnt how to read and write, she would only have known Arabic too. I thought, if Grandfather Ahmet and Grandmother Ayşe were deaf and dumb and could only talk to us in writing, I would never have known either of them. And I wouldn't have a grandmother or a grandfather today.' (*Caravanserai*, p. 49).

secular cities. Outside pressure often has the result that religion becomes part of everyday life, a ritual rather than a spiritual experience. Yet the mother's decision to expose her children to Arabic (even if this is only done to a limited extent) gives the impression that she feels the same rupture with her country's past as her daughter – she was not allowed to learn Arabic as a child, after all – and wants at least her children to understand part of Turkey's cultural and religious history. The middle generation – that of the narrator's parents – is excluded from any knowledge of Arabic. At least the youngest generation has limited access to this heritage, which is the result partly of a more tolerant attitude towards Islam in the Turkey of the 1950s,⁴⁷ and partly of the older generations' will to make their (grand-)children aware of their cultural and religious roots. From this perspective, the narrator feels closer to her grandparents than to her parents, as the former provide access to a part of the Turkish child's identity as her parents will never be able to do.

For the child, the learning of Arabic is a worldly rather than a spiritual experience, as Özdamar demonstrates with the narrator's learning of Arabic. Trying to encourage her granddaughter to pronounce the Arabic words, the grandmother explains how Muhammad delivered God's first messages with the help of the angel Gabriel. After his first revelations Muhammad did not deliver new Qur'an verses for three years, but the narrator does not appear to know that this interval was a time of testing for Muhammad.⁴⁸ She links this break with his lack of knowledge of the Arabic language and does not seem to realize that Arabic *was* Muhammad's mother tongue and that there might have been other, spiritually related reasons that brought the delivery of God's messages to a temporary halt. Instead, the narrator compares herself with Muhammad: according to her childlike perception of learning a language, they share the experience of learning Arabic as a process that drains their strength.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ David Shankland, *Islam and Society in Turkey* (Huntington: Eothen, 1999), pp. 36-40. Although the Democratic Party (DP) did not lessen the significance of Atatürk and his reforms, and secularism for Turkey, their victory in the 1950 election introduced a more open and tolerant attitude towards Islam. This pro-Islamic party successfully 'forg[ed] an alliance between Islam, business and secularism' (p. 40).

⁴⁸ Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood, *Islam, Teach Yourself*, new edn (London: Hodder Education, 2003 [1994]), p. 7.

⁴⁹ See *Karawanserei*, p. 79 / *Caravanserai*, pp. 56-57.

As knowledge of the country's history slips away and only survives in the older generation (by storytelling, teaching their grandchildren Arabic, and telling them about Turkey's history), the narrator must use increasing amounts of strength to preserve it by first learning Arabic. Although formal instruction in the Arabic language and the reading of the Qur'an, which is also associated with religious education, contributes to the younger generations' understanding of Islam, this part of their heritage is hard to grasp as it is barely consciously present for the novel's younger characters, even when they are living in a more religious environment such as in Yenisehir. The narrator observes, 'Es war das arabische Alphabetbuch, ein dünnes Heft, aus sehr armem Papier' (*Karawanserei*, p. 73).⁵⁰ It is only with the help of her grandparents, and her grandmother in particular, that traditions based on Turkey's Arab Islamic heritage are handed down to a generation that is not automatically opposed to them as the middle generation under Atatürk's direct influence still seems to be.

The role of Arabic in the narrator's life comes to the fore particularly in its everyday use. Expressions such as *Maşallah* ('whatever God wishes') and *İnşallah* ('God willing') are customary rather than fully comprehended. Hardly any of the characters know what these phrases actually mean, and the narrator needs to look them up. The monotonous repetition of the phrase *Bismillâhirrahmanirrahim* ('In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful'), which opens every chapter (sura) of the Qur'an, for example, symbolizes this abstract familiarity with her heritage. It is uttered as part of the daily routine or even functions as a talisman later in the narrator's life when the utterance of this word prevents a God-fearing man from raping her:⁵¹

Großmutter sprach diese arabischen Wörter, die wie eine Kamelkarawane hintereinander liefen, in meine Augen guckend, in ihrem Kapadokia-Dorfdialekt. Die Kamelkarawane sammelte sich in meinem Mund, ich sprach

⁵⁰ 'It was the book with the Arabic alphabet, a thin booklet of very poor paper' (*Caravanserai*, p. 52).

⁵¹ This incident happens in Özdamar's subsequent novel *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* [*The Bridge of the Golden Horn*] (KiWi, 731 (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2002 [1998])). The three novels *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*, *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*, and *Seltsame Sterne starren zur Erde* [*Strange Stars Stare to Earth*]: *Wedding – Pankow 1976/77* (KiWi, 845 (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2004 [2003])) constitute a trilogy. The narrators of the three novels can be regarded as one person as the novels outline the life and development of a Turkish girl, then young woman in Turkey and Germany.

die Gebete mit Großmutter, so hatten wir zwei Kamelkarawanen, ihre Kamele, die größer waren als meine, nahmen meine vor ihre Beine und brachten meinen Kamelen das Laufen bei. Beim Sitzen wackelten wir auch wie Kamele, und ich sprach:

'Bismillâhirahmanirrahim

[...]

Amin.'

Ich wußte nicht, was diese Wörter sagten, vielleicht Großmutter Ayşe auch nicht. Das Wort Bismillâhirahmanirrahim kam aus den Mündern von vielen Menschen. (*Karawanserei*, pp. 55-56; original emphasis)⁵²

From her naïve point of view, the narrator translates the Arabic words into pictures, a caravan of camels. Her translations bear resemblance to the Arabic calligraphy that the girl is probably familiar with from visits to the mosque or illustrations in books. Her grandmother serves as a teacher: her bigger camels (her spoken Arabic words) teach her granddaughter's camels how to walk (how to pronounce the Arabic words). As this process takes place, the bond between grandmother and granddaughter seems to grow stronger, in a similar way as Arabic expressions 'serv[e] in a quasi-ritualistic fashion to bind a community together'. Furthermore, these expressions retain 'something of that submission to God's will that is central to the whole notion of Islam'.⁵³ Although in a 'modern' family like the narrator's Islam does not play a central role any more, it is still always present, if not fully comprehended, in language, which signifies an unconscious rather than a conscious perception of Islam.

The repeated pronunciation of Arabic words as part of a religious ritual draws attention to the narrator's 'emphasis on sound rather than meaning'.⁵⁴ The association of those sounds and events, with memories connected with the praying

⁵² 'Looking into my eyes and speaking her Kapadokia village dialect, Grandmother spoke Arabic words that followed each other like a caravan of camels. The caravan of camels collected in my mouth, I spoke the prayers with Grandmother, and so we had two caravans of camels, her camels which were larger than mine, placed them in front, and taught my camels to walk. Sitting there, we swayed like camels too, and I said,

"Bismillâhirahmanirrahim

[...]

Amin."

I didn't know what these words meant, maybe grandmother Ayşe didn't know either. But the word bismillâhirahmanirrahim came from the mouths of many people. When you stepped into a house, you had to put down your right foot first and at the same time say bismillâhirahmanirrahim.' (*Caravanserai*, pp. 37-38).

⁵³ Horrocks, 'In Search of a Lost Past', pp. 23-43 (p. 26).

⁵⁴ Bird, *Women Writers and National Identity*, p. 188 and p. 187.

with her grandmother, for example, seems to be more important than the actual meaning of the Arabic words. This perception of Arabic will change as the narrator grows older and wishes to attach meaning to the abstractly familiar Arabic words. In *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*, the narrator connotes the Arabic language with familiarity, even an emotional home represented by her grandmother, rather than religious significance, which will never play a major part throughout the narrator's life. Despite the fact that Arabic is the language of Islam, the language that the Qur'an was revealed in to the Prophet Muhammad, it is part of the narrator's secular, folk-like rather than religious perception of Islam.

Overall, rituals carried out in Arabic automatically imply a religious meaning for the older generation, but, due to the state's increased secular influence particularly in the early days of the Turkish Republic, hardly any meaning for the younger or middle generation. The novel's youngest generation, exemplified by the narrator, serves as a linking factor, a translator between the generations older than them, and thus between Turkey's lost past and more recent past culminating in its predominantly secular present: the narrator approaches a more conscious dealing with her customs in the form of prayers that her grandmother teaches her. Yet she continues to perceive the Arabic words of prayer as a sensual experience rather than as expressions that carry a religious meaning. Thus, Özdamar critically examines the 'unbridgeable gap in cultural continuity' left behind by Atatürk's attempts to secularize Turkey linguistically.⁵⁵

Turkish expressions also play a vital role in the everyday life of the protagonist. It is foremost the 'idiom used when one person suggests something and another responds in the affirmative',⁵⁶ 'Tamam mı' ('OK?') – 'Tamam' ('OK!'), which plays a vital role in communication, especially between the narrator and her brother Ali: 'Wenn Ali Tamam mı sagte, sagte ich immer Tamam' (*Karawanserei*, p. 185).⁵⁷ She employs this idiom even more unconsciously than Arabic words of prayer: when the narrator prays she knows that she pronounces Arabic words she does not understand, but she – probably like most Turkish native speakers – is not aware of the fact that the supposedly Turkish expression 'Tamam' is of Arabic

⁵⁵ Seyhan, 'Lost in Translation', 414-26 (p. 423).

⁵⁶ Horrocks, 'In Search of a Lost Past', pp. 23-43 (p. 27).

⁵⁷ 'When Ali said tamam mı, I said tamam' (*Caravanserai*, pp. 141-42).

origin.⁵⁸ Turkish speakers have completely appropriated it as a Turkish word, which implies a sense of linguistic completeness: if Arabic words have remained in the Turkish language after its reform, then their origin is often not recognizable. Yet one also needs to point out the sociolinguistic dimension of the relationship between Turkish and Arabic, secular Islam and religious Islam. Arabic words (such as those of prayer) become part of ritual reiteration and social action rather than conscious reflection. This also includes the use of other languages such as English, French and Farsi, or rather loan words from these languages, which have been incorporated into Turkish. In this way, 'Tamam' plays a vital, ritualistic role in the protagonist's everyday life. Although the narrator fully understands these Turkish words on a linguistic level, this particular expression is used in a similar way to the Arabic words of prayer. They are part of a routine rather than a conscious decision regarding what to say next. In this sense, literally linguistic as well as cultural translation processes do not take place.

Özdamar demonstrates the interactive use of the language that the narrator is familiar with, Turkish, and the language that is part of her cultural and religious life, Arabic, and thus draws attention to her fluid movements between languages and cultures. She does not have a fixed linguistic home, but moves between languages and their associated cultures to create her own version of home. This home is based on her Arab Islamic heritage that she primarily gets to know through the language of Islam, Arabic, and the everyday use of her Turkish. However, the narrator needs to migrate further, to Germany, to grow into a critical person who deliberately searches for the connection between Turkish and Arabic, present and past. Germany, which will initiate her conscious linguistic migration from Turkish to German, thus becomes the place where she can go on the linguistic journey of discovering part of her mother tongue's origin.⁵⁹

Ali also addresses the question of having a linguistic home in *Brick Lane*. Here, it is mainly the men and children who speak English as the women, as pointed out in the previous section, live their lives 'at home' where Bengali is spoken. Chanu, who studied English literature, regards his knowledge of this language as undeniably

⁵⁸ I would like to thank Dr Elisabeth Kendall (University of Edinburgh) for this comment.

⁵⁹ Özdamar explores this linguistic journey in *MutterZunge*, which I will discuss in Chapter 4.

important, which he demonstrates by frequently reciting *the* classic English writer, William Shakespeare. He has advantage of the *double vision*, the knowledge of several cultures, of the formerly colonized. Nazneen, however, is linguistically and thus culturally limited, and her linguistic heritage, Bengali and the cultural meanings attached to it, is the only source of communication she can fall back onto. This limitation in her everyday communication causes her feeling of alienation. It also restricts her when meeting people, as, at least at the beginning of the novel, she does not have any knowledge of English, yet not by her own will.

[Nazneen:] 'Razia is going to college to study English.'

[Chanu:] 'Ah, good.'

'Perhaps I could go with her.'

[...]

'What for?'

'For the English lessons.'

'You're going to be a mother.' (*Lane*, pp. 76-77)

The gender roles in this family are also defined in linguistic terms. It is the men's privilege to speak English since they are in touch with a world outside their immediate community. Furthermore, Chanu deliberately prevents Nazneen from learning English to keep her weak and dependent on him. He almost acts like a colonizer who wants to control his subjects. However, for the second generation, speaking English is as natural as growing up in Britain. Yet the fact that Nazneen is not able to speak the same language as her children seems to compromise her traditional role as 'good' mother. Immigration does not open the same spaces for women as it does for their husbands. It would be wrong, however, to identify this as a feature of Muslim communities. One can view learning English as one part of the process of westernization, or rather of learning about and translating other cultures. This is a process which especially Nazneen's children, who have encountered British culture from an early age, are going through. Their heritage, which is often wrongly reduced to their religion, Islam, is frequently perceived by the outside world as the only factor that determines these immigrants' lives. Yet it is subject to constant change and reinterpretation.

For Nazneen, this process takes much longer and is more self-conscious, and takes place via language. Ali therefore introduces the religious character Karim in the

narrative in order to demonstrate the flexibility of the characters' cultural heritage, including their religion, in a non-Muslim environment.

'Salaat alert,' he [Karim] said.

'What do you mean?' She [Nazneen] was so surprised she slipped into Bengali.

'On th-th-the phone. It's a service you can get. To warn you of prayer time.'

'Will you do namaz here?' She said it without thinking, in the same way that another time she had switched instinctively to English. [...]

'Allahu Akbar.' [...]

She tried to stop the prayer words forming on her lips. To pray with an unrelated man, it was not permitted. She would pray later. (*Lane*, p. 234)

As a woman for whom religion plays a major part in her everyday life, reinterpretations of her religious practices represent a significant part of Nazneen's translation process. By letting Karim pray in her house, Nazneen partly breaks the rule that forbids prayer with a strange man (yet she does not pray with him). Furthermore, the mix of the languages they have in common, Bengali and English, which Nazneen has meanwhile managed to learn a little, describes their relationship: it is swinging between a deeply religious mutuality and an increasing openness in their relationship, which is demonstrated by the partly joint act of praying. They both are believers who share the same religious values, and these values (as represented by the act of praying) bring them closer together. However, Nazneen's slippage into Bengali, which is clearly the language that she feels most comfortable in, and Karim's uncomfortable stuttering in this language, his 'former' mother tongue, also suggests that problems arise regarding the understanding and subsequent reinterpretation of their relationship: Nazneen seems to be the stronger person in their relationship, whereas Karim tends to require strict rules of behaviour, especially when outside his religious realm. Consequently, language serves as an indicator for the diverse perceptions of the characters' relationship with regard to their roles that shift or are even abandoned (Nazneen becomes Karim's lover, after all). Cultural translation works therefore or even is initiated on a personal level before being transferred into the wider context of the changing nature of the Muslim Bengali community, whose old set of rules of behaviour incorporates more and more aspects

of the formerly foreign, that is, British, or also commonly referred to as Western, culture.

Arabic is also part of the family's religious life. 'How would it [the Qur'an] sound in Arabic? More lovely even than in Bengali, she supposed, for those were the actual words of God' (Lane, p. 20). Yet, as in *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*, Arabic is only an abstractly familiar element in religious practice. In fact, Arabic as such is absent and is only imagined rather than used. Especially in a predominantly non-Muslim society such as Britain it becomes more and more difficult for the characters to remember their heritage.

However, this heritage, their 'own', still serves as an element of differentiation from 'the rest', as the establishment of the Tower Hamlets' Muslim association, the 'Bengal Tigers', demonstrates. Although they define themselves exclusively through their Muslim identity, they do not seem to base it linguistically on 'the actual words of God' (Lane, p. 20), but on the language that derives from their national identity. During the first meeting of the 'Bengal Tigers' this issue is raised:

'Why don't we do this all in our own language?'

[...]

Karim stood with his arms folded. 'I will answer. This meeting is open to all Muslims. I am talking about the ummah here. Every brother and every sister, wherever they come from.'

The Questioner stood up and looked elaborately around the hall, even at the empty chairs. '*Ekhane amra shobai Bangali?* Anyone here not speak Bengali?'

There was a moment's silence before a chair scraped back and a black man in a wider-sleeved swirly-print shirt stood up. 'Do I look like a Bengali to you, brother?' (Lane, p. 238)

Ali humorously represents religious identity as a double-sided issue here: on the one hand, it seems to be based on where one comes from, namely a Muslim country such as Bangladesh, yet on the other, it theoretically embraces all Muslims, the *umma*. By calling themselves 'Bengal Tigers', however, the members of this group express a strong affinity with their country of origin, and are tendentiously excluding Muslims from other countries. Ali looks at this issue with an ironic eye: in their keen ambition to establish a religious group, the 'Bengal Tigers' completely overlook the black

man, that is, the fact that Muslims can have various appearances, and not only the Bangladeshi one they are used to. English is therefore the language that the Muslims living in East London are likely to have in common. Yet as the language of the West, the Other of the radical Muslims such as the 'Bengal Tigers', it is paradoxically needed as the tool of translation and mediation between Muslims of different origins.

In *Brick Lane*, Ali constructs linguistic identity, as Muslim identity, on the basis of the language of the country of origin, Bengali, rather than the language of Islam, Arabic. Her characters define themselves primarily in terms of a specific kind of Islam: the Islam that is culturally and linguistically influenced by Bangladesh, rather than a general idea of Islam. With her novel, Ali emphasizes the diversity of versions of Islam, which is often overlooked in the West. She deliberately contributes to a differentiated understanding of Islam as part of British culture.

Language as a form of cultural translation and self-definition is a two-way operation: firstly, the new culture is translated by means of known signifiers in order to find a place that can be called 'home', and secondly, cultural translation affects the cultural baggage brought into the new country: it is reconsidered and re-valued in the light of the new surroundings and cultures that gradually become familiar to the migrants. Language is also a means of referring back to and comprehending one's heritage, and, possibly, of differentiating oneself from non-immigrants and non-Muslims. In this sense, it provides stability as an emotional home. 'Home' as stability can also be given by obeying fixed roles in an initially unfamiliar environment, which is significant in relation to perceptions of gender.

1.2.3 Gender and Migration

Although Özdamar and Ali reveal cultural diversity as a positive factor in their novels, their characters also need stability to experience this diversity as an asset. They show one form of stability through the presence of women whose ability to conform to different roles – especially those expected by men – they frequently demonstrate. The West often assumes that Muslim women in particular are affected

by their Islamic heritage. According to Horrocks, in Turkey, the central country in *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*, they are confronted with

on the one hand the liberating influence of Atatürk's reforms, the introduction of a new family code based on that of Switzerland, the outlawing of polygamy, the granting of new rights to women in both the political and the educational sphere; [yet] on the other hand the persistence of patriarchal structures combined with the in practice, if not in theory, oppressive nature of many religious customs.⁶⁰

In the novels studied here, women, more so than men, seem, therefore, to be situated between Muslim and Western perceptions of their roles, primarily as wives. However, the novels display differences in the expectations placed on women, especially among the generations. With her narrator's maternal grandfather Ahmet, for instance, Özdamar uncovers a traditional view of gender roles.

Dann sagte Großvater: 'Mein Hals ist trocken, bring mir Wasser, Stadtmädchen.' Als ich lief, sagte Großvater Ahmet: 'Meine Tochter, lauf, aber tritt mit deinen Füßen nicht so fest auf die Erde, dein Schmuck wackelt, das gibt den Männern Wollust.' Mein Busen sollte nicht wackeln. Er erzählte, als unser Prophet Mohammed lebte, kamen viele Männer in sein Haus, sie störten Mohammed und seine Frauen. [...] Es kam ein Koranvers auf die Erde. [...] Habe Angst vor Allah, höre meine Worte mit deinem ganzen Körper, ich will, daß du schöne Sachen ißt und trinkst, das schaffe ich für dich heran, sei mir gehorsam, dein Gehorsam ist Allahs und seiner Propheten Wunsch. Wer seinem Ehemann entgegentritt, tritt Allah und seinen Propheten entgegen. [...] Er darf an ihre groben Stellen hauen, am besten auf die Hüften. [...] Manchmal, beim Essen, nahm mir Großvater mit seiner Hand das Obst weg und aß es selbst, ganz langsam, dann sagte er: 'Mädchen sein, heißt Geduld haben.' Großmutter sagte mir heimlich: 'Der unbarmherzige Ahmet Ağa.' (*Karawanserei*, pp. 309-11)⁶¹

⁶⁰ Horrocks, 'In Search of a Lost Past', pp. 23-43 (p. 33).

⁶¹ 'Then Grandfather said, "My throat is dry, bring me some water, city girl." As I ran off, my grandfather Ahmet said, "My daughter, you may run, but don't take such hard steps, it makes your treasure wobble and that makes men lustful." My bosom was not supposed to move. He told us that when our prophet Mohammed was alive, many men used to come to Mohammed's house, they bothered him and his wives. [...] A verse for the Koran arrived on earth [...]. Fear Allah, and listen to my words with your whole body, I want you to eat and drink good things, I provide these things for you, do as I tell you, your obedience is your wish of Allah and his prophet. If you oppose your husband, you oppose Allah and his prophet. [...] He can beat her in her coarse places, preferably her hips. [...] Sometimes at mealtimes, Grandfather would take a fruit out of my hand and eat it himself, very slowly, and say, "Being a girl, means being patient." Grandmother would say quietly, "Merciless Ahmet Ağa."' (*Caravanserai*, pp. 240-41).

Although the narrator generally refrains from direct criticism, she lets her grandmother Ayşe as a representative of the older, supposedly more traditional generation raise her voice. This character also gives Özdamar the opportunity to be critical of gender-related practices in her cultural heritage and to show that women question and subvert them in Turkish society. Ahmet perceives women as servants and does not see any potential for the changing role of women in modern society. Yet the narrator seems to have the 'patience' her grandfather prescribes her and does not complain. The narrator will grow into one of those 'female figures of strong-minded independence who have carved out lives of their own, often in the face of powerful social and religious pressures to conform.'⁶² In this sense, Özdamar does not depict women stereotypically as subservient objects.⁶³ A case in point are the crazy women who live on the margins of society. They perform a form of resistance by subverting well-known suppositions of how a woman is to behave. One could see the narrator as a 'milder' form of crazy woman as she leaves Turkey behind at the end of the novel in search for a new home abroad. (It was usually men who immigrated to Germany, with their families following later.) Her strong will to determine her life by herself does not need to be supported by raging against her grandfather. Her form of 'rebellion' is of a more subtle, and, therefore, effective nature.

Although Özdamar's women tend to be independent and strong-minded, they cannot escape the expectations imposed on them by the patriarchal society they live in. As 'patriarchal custom goes hand-in-hand with religious influence',⁶⁴ the narrator's underlying criticism is directed to the patriarchal system rather than religion. Özdamar demonstrates this by pointing out the different interpretations of the most controversial symbol of Muslim femininity, the headscarf: in the novel, the women wear headscarves not primarily for religious reasons but when they think it is appropriate.

Wir hüpfen, bis aus vier Häusern vier Frauenköpfe aus den Fenstern rausschauen, die vier Frauen hatten alle Kopftücher, eine war meine Mutter, sie hatte auch ein Kopftuch [...]. Ich ging [...] ins Haus rein. Meine Mutter

⁶² Horrocks, 'In Search of a Lost Past', pp. 23-43 (p. 33).

⁶³ Cf. *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Fatma hatte jetzt kein Kopftuch. 'Wo ist das Kopftuch, Mutter?' Sie sagte, das Kopftuch werde sie nur für fremde Leute tragen. Ich hatte sie bis heute noch nicht mit Kopftuch gesehen. Nur meine Großmutter trug zwei Kopftücher übereinander. 'Warum trägst du für die Leute Kopftuch, Mutter?' Fatma sagte: 'Hier ist eine religiöse Straße, man muß die Menschen nicht stören.' Wenn Vater unsere Villa fertig gebaut hat, braucht sie dort kein Kopftuch tragen, weil dort nur die Memurs (Bürokraten) wohnen werden. (*Karawanserei*, p. 66)⁶⁵

By clearly showing that wearing a headscarf is a conscious decision, Özdamar dismantles 'the Western myth of the headscarf as symbol of religious and societal oppression'.⁶⁶ It is simply

ein Kleidungsstück, dessen Gebrauch neben religiösen auch praktische oder pragmatische Gründe haben und in unterschiedlichen Kontexten eine Vielfalt spezifischer Bedeutungen signalisieren kann. [...] Das Kopftuch ist ein kulturelles Emblem, das bewußt eingesetzt wird, um der Umwelt Gruppenzugehörigkeit und Anpassung an gewisse Normen zu signalisieren und um sich dadurch einen Handlungsspielraum zu schaffen.⁶⁷

The women wear their headscarves out of respect – the narrator's mother out of respect for the religious people who live in the same street as her family and her grandmother out of respect for God – yet not because it is imposed onto them. If one sees the headscarf as part of a non-Western lifestyle, then 'Özdamar [...] is implicitly questioning the notion [...] that the only way for Muslim women to improve their status is to abandon their native culture and adopt the ways of the West',⁶⁸ that is, to reject the headscarf completely. However, the narrator clearly demonstrates the necessity, not complete rejection, of traditional habits that emphasize the comfort of

⁶⁵ 'We hopped until four women's heads looked out of four windows; the four women were all wearing headscarves, one of them was my mother, she had a headscarf too [...]. I came into the house [...]. My mother Fatma didn't have her headscarf on. "Where's your headscarf, Mother?" She said she would only wear the scarf for strangers. I had never seen her with a scarf before. Only my grandmother wore headscarves, two of them, one over the other. "Why do you wear a scarf for the other people, Mother?" Fatma said, "This is a religious street. You mustn't upset people." As soon as father finishes building our villa she won't have to wear a headscarf because only memurs (bureaucrats) will be living around there.' (*Caravanserai*, pp. 46-47).

⁶⁶ Wierschke, *Schreiben als Selbstbehauptung*, p. 191: 'der westliche Mythos des Kopftuches als Zeichen religiöser und gesellschaftlicher Unterdrückung'.

⁶⁷ Ibid.: 'a piece of clothing which is used for religious as well as practical and pragmatic reasons. It signals specific meanings in different contexts. [...] The headscarf is a cultural emblem which is used consciously in order to signal the belonging to a specific group and adaptation to certain norms and therefore to gain scope of action'.

⁶⁸ Horrocks, 'In Search of a Lost Past', pp. 23-43 (p. 36).

an emotional home, which makes it possible for people of different beliefs and value systems to live together.

Another example of the necessity of incorporating traditions into a lifestyle that draws upon a number of Western and non-Western customs are the Turkish baths. Often regarded as a stereotypically Oriental institution, they function as a place where only women meet and exchange experiences, give and receive advice, or simply talk to strengthen their feeling of belonging to a community. They are also a place of education and preparation of young girls for their roles as women. These examples – the headscarves and the Turkish baths – demonstrate that cultural translation does not mean the absolute transferral of one set of cultural entities into another. On the contrary, it contributes to a hybrid understanding of one's identity by choice, especially in such a diverse place like Turkey with its mixture of Muslim and Western traditions.

Although the narrator seems to enjoy the comforts of a home based on the diversity of cultures and personal relationships such as the ones between the women, Özdamar depicts her as a migrant who is always drawn to the outside, to a life beyond her immediate experiences. The freedom she enjoys when playing with boys in Bursa can be read as a symbol of her migration, for her distancing from her home, which results in her leaving for Germany:

Ich lief hinter den Jungen und dem Himmelsgürtel her, unsere heilige Brücke lief mehr und mehr weg von mir, mit dem Geruch unserer geruchlosen, seelenlosen Gasse, wo ich meine Mutter mit ihrer neuen Tochter in einem Bett im Schlaf gelassen hatte, als ich sie das letzte Mal sah. (*Karawanserei*, pp. 143-44)⁶⁹

The narrator is clearly desperate for a change. (Her desire is also indicated by her attempted suicides towards the end of the novel.) She actively wants to run away from Turkey, yet simultaneously feels that her country also withdraws itself from her (the 'holy bridge runs away'). Özdamar presents the solution to her narrator's discontent, the ultimate migration to another country, in a positive, yet not

⁶⁹ 'I ran after the boys and the skybelt, our holy bridge ran farther and farther away from me along with the smell of our odourless, soulless street where I had left my mother asleep in bed with her new daughter the last time I saw her.' (*Caravanserai*, p. 108).

romanticized or mystified light. As it offers people with different cultures and ways of living, it opens the narrator's eyes – as a woman and a Turkish migrant.

In *Brick Lane*, Ali's characters, primarily the women, initially perceive migration as a negative factor, since it creates a distance between memories of a happy and idealized past, and an initially miserable present. Nazneen did not have a choice but had to follow her husband to London and into the secluded life as a Bengali housewife in the 'diaspora' of a tower block. Chanu, however, has made his decision to marry a girl from the countryside deliberately. It also seems to have been based on his existence as an immigrant in a foreign country. As he explains:

'When I married her, I said: she is a good worker. Girl from the village. Unspoilt. All the clever-clever girls –' He broke off and looked at Shahana [his daughter]. 'All the clever-clever girls are not worth one hair on her head.'
(*Lane*, p. 207)

Ali portrays a representative of the first generation of male migrants for whom moving to a new country meant establishing an economically more secure future. In showing Chanu as someone who, in order to reach this aim, feels that he has to work hard, especially as a migrant, she reveals the hopeless situation of such migrants. As Chanu constantly fails in his enterprise to be successful, he increasingly bases his self-expectations on unstable dreams of, for example, being promoted in his job. In this sense, his masculinity, focused on the role of the breadwinner and family father, is threatened and the notion of establishing his and his family's (not so) new life based on traditional values, which he sees still preserved in the Bengali countryside, gains ground. He perceives the city as a decadent place. Ironically, he chose to live in London, which could be regarded as an even more decadent place than the cities in Bangladesh: London is a Western city and seems to support 'loose' lifestyles. For Chanu, living in a new place does not mean a new life altogether. On the contrary, as I have already pointed out, it is primarily the men who recreate their new home on the basis of their old home, and install their wives as mothers and housewives belonging to the latter version of home.

Bearing this observation in mind, Nazneen, often hopelessly homesick, which is demonstrated by her 'hallucinations' of seeing her village Gouripur in Bangladesh,

initially flees into a comfort zone, her 'home', that she sees in what she knows from Bangladesh: everyday items such as Bengali food.

Nazneen [...] took a tub of yoghurt from the fridge and sprinkled it with sugar. She leaned against the work surface and ate. 'Eat! Eat!' her husband told her at mealtimes. But for him she would not eat. She showed her self-restraint like this. Her self-denial. She wanted to make it visible. It became a habit, then a pleasure, taking solace in these midnight meals.

Amma used to make yoghurt: thick and sweet and warm. Nothing like these plastic pots from the plastic English cows. But still. With the sugar, it went down. And it was very convenient. When she thought about Gouripur now, she thought about inconvenience. (*Lane*, p. 77)

As in *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*, Ali mainly portrays 'home' as an accumulation of small or simple things rather than as a whole. Yet unlike in Özdamar's novel where 'home' consists of an accumulation of moments gathered while the protagonists travel and migrate, in *Brick Lane* these everyday items trigger a nostalgia which the women increasingly put into perspective since Bangladesh also has negative aspects such as 'inconvenience'. Initially, the women who spend most of their lives in the house, are more passive and less strong-willed than the women in *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*. This argument is supported by Nazneen's assumption that a woman's task is to endure.

'We will suffer in silence,' [...] said Amma. [...] What were they suffering? Nazneen wanted to ask. [...] 'That is all that is left to us in this life,' said Auntie. [...]

'We are just women. What can we do?'

'They [men] know it. That's why they act as they do.'

'God has made the world this way.' (*Lane*, pp. 102-3)

Her endurance results in a self-imposed structured lifestyle: 'regular prayer, regular housework' (*Lane*, p. 51). It needs an outer influence to break through this rigidity. Ironically, Karim, who gradually changes into an 'Islamic fundamentalist', focuses his life on 'regular prayer' as well, yet for completely different reasons: while Nazneen prays primarily as a form of comfort, Karim sees regular prayer as a means to return to the 'right' way of life. For Nazneen, this man whose life is centred on Islam, a religion that, in a superficial Western perception, does not leave any space

for the self-development of women, shows her possibilities beyond her secluded life. By starting to attend the meetings of the 'Bengal Tigers', for example, she leaves her familiar space and ventures towards new horizons: she starts to think for herself and to express her discontent with her life as a Bengali housewife. Thus, Islam becomes the driving force for her 'liberation', which results in her ultimate decision to stay in Britain and not to follow, as she once passively did, her husband to his ideal place of residence.

Ali also depicts women as strong-willed and independent, but in a different way to Özdamar: being out of touch with their country of origin – unlike the women in *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* who live in their country of origin – they feel dislocated and search for and also find a place of refuge, despite their lives as subordinate wives. By conceptualizing and comprehending London as their home they establish ways of breaking away from their husband's longing for a home long past and finally separate from them – spatially, yet not necessarily emotionally.

As a result, even though it takes longer for Nazneen to realize where her home is, and it is with the help of a man whose religious ideas stereotypically place women in a subservient position, she manages to overcome her passivity and find *her* home without the 'guardian' who was not able to live the life of a (successful) migrant. Ali's portrayal of women as more flexible and adaptable migrants than men leads to their perception as more successful migrants who create homes of their own by incorporating the new into the old. They do not forget where they came from; but while the men's nostalgia for a past long gone prevents them from finding a home and makes them passive, women change from their position as forced passive housewives into active women, whose life is not centred on histories that are nothing else but simply histories. Ali's migrant women choose the future, the essence of a migrant's success.

Both Özdamar and Ali take a critical stance towards migrant men: they good-naturedly poke fun at their novels' self-important and insecure men who fail. In the process of migration as these authors perceive it, women move from the position of the passive follower of their husbands to the active and open-minded doers, sometimes to the extent that they reject the old just as their husbands are trying to recreate it. Their willingness to embrace their present and the cultures that surround

them, proves to be the more practical and, consequently, successful tool in creating a comfortable home in an initially alien environment.

1.3 Islam as 'Home'?

The novels *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* and *Brick Lane* deny the myth of a fixed home based on a long-gone past and a form of Islam that does not invite any cultural influences, yet Özdamar and Ali employ different means. Özdamar evokes 'home' as continuous movement: her characters never arrive at a fixed point, neither physically nor emotionally.⁷⁰ She creates identity as linguistic and cultural plurality, and constant change, which, after a painful learning process, is positively connoted. In this sense, Özdamar describes 'das Leben als ein Ort, wo man ein bißchen bleibt und dann wieder weggeht. Ja, und dann kommen viele Figuren rein und raus, wie in der Karawanserei. Sie wechselt dauernd Gäste.'⁷¹ These guests, along with the movement of 'passing through', form migrants' identities as 'discontinuities' and 'bridges'.⁷² I thus define the novel's protagonist's – literal and metaphorical – migrations as a chance to negotiate multiple identities based on complicated translation processes and the (deliberate) ambiguities they leave behind. Thus, Özdamar portrays a girl becoming a young woman who learns to perceive her migration not as loss, but rather as the chance to accumulate more cultural and linguistic items for her identity. She reveals her narrator's religion, Islam, as part of Turkey's multifaceted heritage. While the protagonist is dealing with her Arab Islamic heritage and the consequences it has for her as a girl, she discovers the hybrid components of her identity and even adds another one by spatially, yet not emotionally leaving it behind to migrate to Germany.

The process of identity formation is of a different nature in *Brick Lane*, and the protagonists' religion plays a vital role in finding stability in an initially alien

⁷⁰ See Konuk, *Identitäten im Prozeß*, p. 84.

⁷¹ Özdamar in an interview with Wierschke, in *Schreiben als Selbstbehauptung*, p. 249: 'life as a place where one stays for a little while and then leaves it again. [...] Many people come and go like in a caravanserai. It constantly changes guests'.

⁷² Cf. Müller, 'Ich war Mädchen, war ich Sultanin', pp. 133-49 (p. 136 and pp. 143-44).

place. Although Ali also depicts migration as the negotiation of unstable identities, the notion of loss and the – especially for the men – painful realization that the past cannot be regained is more prominent than in Özdamar's novel and creates major difficulties among the characters. In this context, Islam frequently serves as a vehicle that reveals unfulfilled dreams and desires. In *Brick Lane*, the notion of home is based on the need to belong somewhere. Stability is partly given by the religious practices demanded of a faithful Muslim as part of his/her culture. The family, who live in a predominantly Muslim environment, try to lead a religious life. Yet Ali exposes this way of living as a refuge rather than a conscious examination of their Muslim roots. On this basis, the feeling of loss and fragmentation can be limited, yet not totally overcome: Chanu returns to Bangladesh. Nazneen, however, stays behind with her daughters. She – like the women in the novels in general – learns to see migration in a positive light. Women seem, therefore, to be the stronger and more flexible characters who are able to adapt more easily without necessarily denying their heritage. As the men tend to constantly refer back to their past as an ideal home instead of trying to build a new home situated in the present and pointing towards the future, they, unlike the women, do not seem to overcome their suffering from a feeling of division that results in their invention of an immovable home.

It tends to be the imagination of the male migrants that is the reason for their constant longing for their past and roots which is opposed by the female flexibility and openness to invite other cultures into their everyday lives. The history of the migrant is inescapable,⁷³ and both novels suggest that it should be treated as *one* part of one's identity rather than the *only* determining factor of one's self. Both Özdamar and Ali do so by presenting the female characters as the more successful migrants, as they are willing to accept their present and incorporate it into their past. They eventually find a home, whereas the men still seem to be looking for it elsewhere.

Having gone through 'ethnographic operations' themselves,⁷⁴ having experienced and creatively dealt with migrations and the feeling of being 'different', Özdamar and Ali address the difficulties of multiculturalism and challenge Western perceptions of passive and closed-minded migrants, primarily from the perspective of

⁷³ Cf. Laura Moss, 'The Politics of Everyday Hybridity: Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*', *Wasafiri*, 39 (Summer 2003), 11-17 (p. 11).

⁷⁴ I again borrow this term from Wolf, 'Culture as Translation', pp. 180-92 (p. 182).

women. Their transcultural novels suggest, therefore, that the idea of a stable home based on a certain way of living needs to be overcome. The assumption that cultures are fixed entities consequently becomes obsolete. Özdamar and Ali demonstrate that the decision for one culture is neither desirable nor possible. Migrants do not have to live in an in-between state – between religions, cultures, and languages – but can use the creative potential of their migrant situation and simply be.⁷⁵

The next chapter looks into the ‘ethnographic operations’ of a traveller and a pilgrim. It asks how their movements, which – in contrast to migration – lead back to the starting points of their journeys, shape their perceptions of Islam.

⁷⁵ Cf. Moss, ‘The Politics of Everyday Hybridity, 11-17 (p. 13).

2 Travelling to Islam¹

Pilgrimage and Hajj: V.S. Naipaul's *Among the Believers* and *Beyond Belief*, and Ilija Trojanow's *Zu den Heiligen Quellen des Islam*

This chapter focuses on the experience of Islam not from a migrant's, but from a pilgrim's and visitor's perspective. It examines both travelling to Islam's origin and to the places where it is lived, and compares traditional with metaphorical pilgrimages. I analyse the significance of travelling and the immediate interaction with Islam for the traveller and writer. I thereby reveal the writers' different versions of Islam, which are primarily derived from opposing concepts of originality and diversity within Islam.

2.1 The Writer as Traveller and/or Pilgrim

The previous chapter discussed the notion of moving with Islam, and analysed the interrelation between Islam, migration, and the creation of 'home'. However, Muslim

¹ An earlier version of sections of this chapter was published as 'Inauthentic Islam? V.S. Naipaul's *Among the Believers* and *Beyond Belief*', *Islam in Südasien*, Themenschwerpunkt des Südasien-Informationsnetz: *suedasion.info*, ed. by Nadja-Christina Schneider, Maria Framke, and Christoph Sprung (2006) <<http://www.suedasion.info/analysen/1462>> [last accessed 30 August 2007] (29 para.).

migration primarily works in the opposite direction: Muslims as well as non-Muslims usually travel *to* it – to its original sites as well as to the places where it is lived. Travelling to Islam can also be regarded as a (spiritual) experience of Islam among its believers. The travellers I am concerned with here go on pilgrimages, both in a traditional and a metaphorical sense. This chapter explores this particular kind of movement and asks how significant travelling and, as a result of that, the immediate interaction with Islam are for the traveller's identity. I focus on the hajj as one of the Five Pillars of Islam and thus a Muslim way of travelling, yet also on the metaphorical pilgrimage of the traveller-writer as a form of self-exploration.

Migration writing was the focus of the first chapter. This chapter considers the travel writers' migratory experiences and their influences on the journey as well as their reflections in the texts: V.S. Naipaul and Ilija Trojanow have undertaken the transition from migrant to traveller. Migration is usually not a movement of choice (it tends to be caused by the migrant's need or desire to find a better home); whereas a traveller chooses to go on his/her trip – and returns home. This significant difference in movement has consequences for the perceptions of the traveller's environment: s/he translates in a different way than a migrant, since making sense of the new surroundings is not an essential part of their travelling. Travellers, like migrants, employ techniques of translation, yet the aim of their journey (the discovery of other countries and cultures) tends to be determined by a 'quest for knowledge', not an urge to settle in. This chapter will develop the notion of translation further in travel texts written by former migrants.

Traditionally, travel writing establishes relations between peoples of different cultures – within as well as beyond the text –,² and thus enables both writer and reader to view him/herself in the mirror of the Other. In travel texts, the act of travelling is more than just physical movement. It is simultaneously 'a mode of exploring the world as well as the self',³ which starts by locating the Self in opposition to the unknown or the Other. This process helps create order for the

² See Dennis Porter, *Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 3.

³ Hermann Schlösser, 'Reiseliteratur als Literatur der Reisenden', in *Reiseformen des Geschriebenen: Selbsterfahrung und Weltdarstellung in Reisebüchern Wolfgang Koeppens, Rolf Dieter Brinkmanns und Hubert Fichtes*, *Literatur und Leben: Neue Folge*, 34 (Wien: Böhlau, 1987), p. 15: 'Reisen ist ein Muster der Welterschließung und der Persönlichkeitsbildung'.

traveller on the basis of hierarchies whereby the familiar tends to be positively connoted and the unfamiliar negatively.⁴ Karin Hlavin-Schulze emphasizes that travel writing describes not so much *what* is being perceived and experienced but rather *how* this process takes place.⁵ As a result, the reader engages more deeply with the traveller and less with the country written about. The latter often serves as a platform for the cultural self-representation of the traveller.⁶ In this context, Homi K. Bhabha emphasizes that the Other as 'the object of identification is ambivalent'.⁷ The Other can be constructed as a positive as well as negative 'counter-picture' or as a 'completion'.⁸ However, the Other is usually 'anticipated and tolerated from a distance',⁹ whilst the task of travel writing is to find a balance between 'making the foreign familiar and, simultaneously, preserving it as foreign'.¹⁰ Thus, according to Emanuel Levinas, alterity appears as a human constant,¹¹ a constant which appears to be necessary for travel writing.

⁴ See Ortfried Schäffter, 'Modi des Fremderlebens', in *Das Fremde: Erfahrungsmöglichkeiten zwischen Faszination und Bedrohung*, ed. by Ortfried Schäffter (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991), pp. 11-28 (particularly p. 12 and p. 14).

⁵ Karin Hlavin-Schulze, 'Man reist ja nicht, um anzukommen': *Reisen als kulturelle Praxis*, Campus: Forschung, 771 (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1998), p. 11.

⁶ Peter J. Brenner, *Der Reisebericht: Die Entwicklung einer Gattung in der deutschen Literatur*, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 2097: Materialien (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1989), p. 18.

⁷ Bhabha, 'DissemiNation', pp. 139-70 (p. 162).

⁸ Schäffter, 'Modi des Fremderlebens', pp. 11-28 (p. 19 and p. 22). See also Tzvetan Todorov, *Die Eroberung Amerikas: Das Problem des Anderen*, Edition Suhrkamp, 1213: Neue Folge, 213 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1985; originally publ. as *Conquête de l'Amérique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982)).

⁹ Eduard Obendiek about Zygmunt Bauman in *Der lange Schatten des babylonischen Turmes: Das Fremde und der Fremde in der Literatur*, Sammlung Vandenhoeck (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), p. 23: 'auf Distanz antizipiert und toleriert'. See also Zygmunt Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity', in *Questions of Cultural Identity* (see Hall, above), pp. 18-36.

¹⁰ Vincent Crapanzano, 'Das Dilemma des Hermes: Die verschleierte Unterwanderung der ethnographischen Beschreibung', in *Kultur als Text: Die anthropologische Wende in der Literaturwissenschaft* (see Bachmann-Medick, above), pp. 161-93 (pp. 162-63): 'das Fremde vertraut machen und gleichzeitig die Fremdheit erhalten'.

¹¹ Obendiek about Emanuel Levinas in *Der lange Schatten des babylonischen Turmes*, p. 32: 'Alterität als menschliche Konstante'. In *Time and the Other* Levinas writes: 'The Other as Other is not only an alter ego: the Other is what I myself am not. The Other is this, not because of the Other's character, or physiognomy, or psychology, but because of the Other's very alterity. [...] The relationship with alterity is neither spatial nor conceptual.' (Emanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. by Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1987); here qtd. from Emanuel Levinas, 'Time and the Other', trans. by Richard A. Cohen, in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. by Seán Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989 [1999 printing]), pp. 37-58 (lectures originally publ. in *Le Choix – Le Monde – L'Existence*, ed. by Jean Wahl (Grenoble-Paris: Arthaud, 1947), pp. 125-96), then separately with a new Preface (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1979)), (p. 48)).

Klaus R. Scherpe and Alexander Honold analyse the travel writer's first encounter with the Other and describe it as the 'dilemma of understanding [due to cultural differences; F.M.] which results in the act of writing'.¹² Travel writing deals with this gap of understanding. However, the means of approaching this gap are diverse. As Hermann Schlösser points out, a genre of 'travel writing' does not exist.¹³ It appears, rather, as a mode in constant processes of redefinition and readjustment according to the travel writer's needs and wishes. In this context, Peter Brenner emphasizes travel writing's 'closeness to fiction'.¹⁴ It seems that the 'foreign' can often only be grasped and explained with the help of the writer's imagination, which influences both the writer's perception of the country visited and the subsequent travel account. The book is the result of the traveller's examination of what s/he hopes and wishes to see and what s/he actually experiences. Although travel writers take true experiences as the basis for their accounts and often wish to quote reality, they cannot achieve an 'authentic' report. Travel writing constructs a particular country: this act is preconditioned by the writer's own cultural background and imagination, and his/her place in society. These preconditions rarely leave room for new approaches to the unknown. There is an urge to merge the unknown with the known in order to understand the foreign world.¹⁵ This turns into an 'ethnographic process' whereby the act of re-producing the Other in the text contributes to its comprehension.¹⁶

These techniques tend to be employed in what is regarded as Western travel writing (it developed as a 'Western form of literature'¹⁷). In contrast, being a non-Western tradition of travel writing, hajj literature (the writing about the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca) is less about discovering a new country and the interaction with an Other. It aims at re-capturing the spiritual experiences of the pilgrim in the text; it is a renewed experience of the journey, an inner reflection of the pilgrim. On their hajj, all the pilgrims are on the same social level; the opposition between Self

¹² Klaus R. Scherpe and Alexander Honold, 'Auf dem Papier sind Indianer weiß, im Ritual die Weißen farbig: Fremdeheitsforschung in der Literaturwissenschaft', *Humboldt-Spektrum*, 4 (1995), 28-34 (p. 29): 'Verstehensdilemma, das in einen Schreibakt mündet'.

¹³ Schlösser, 'Reiseliteratur als Literatur der Reisenden', p. 9.

¹⁴ Brenner, *Der Reisebericht*, p. 14: 'Nähe zur Fiktion'.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 27 and p. 30.

¹⁶ See Bachmann-Medick, 'Einleitung', in *Kultur als Text*, pp. 7-64 (p. 32): 'der ethnographische Prozess'.

¹⁷ See Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters*, p. viii.

and Other thus loses its meaning. The journey and its textualization tend to be a celebration of the unity of believers and not the construction of a country or culture.

Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori stress that there is a 'specific importance of travel and its significance as a process of social action in understanding "Islam" and ideas of Muslim community'.¹⁸ The pilgrimage as a unique celebration of religious belief reinforces the traveller's feeling of belonging to the Muslim community. The Prophet Muhammad emigrated from Mecca to Medina in 622 (*hijra*), fleeing persecution 'by the Meccan aristocracy, who regarded Muhammad's claim to prophecy and reformist agenda, with its implicit criticism of the political and socio-economic status quo, as a challenge to their leadership and interests.'¹⁹ In Medina, Muhammad established the first Muslim community (*umma*). This significant event marks the beginning of Muslim history and the Muslim calendar. The pilgrimage establishes a close tie to Islam's origin and 'marks the believer's identity and her or his membership of the community of Muslims.'²⁰ Although the pilgrimage is an essentially communal form of travelling, it also makes each traveller become aware of his/her individuality as a believer. This two-fold experience may shape his/her identity, both consciously and unconsciously.

Writing about the hajj has a strong tradition. Writers such as the philosopher and theologian Al-Ghazālī, who undertook the hajj in 1097,²¹ and Ibn Jubayr, who travelled between 1183 and 1185, have influenced the genre of hajj writing, *rihla* (journey), named after Ibn Jubayr's travel account (1184).²² One of the most important and widely read writers is Ibn Battutah, who travelled extensively between 1325 and 1354, and went on his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1326.²³ In his foreword to

¹⁸ Eickelman and Piscatori, 'Social Theory in the Study of Muslim Societies', pp. 3-25 (p. 3).

¹⁹ Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, p. 27.

²⁰ Melman, 'The Middle East/Arabia', pp. 105-21 (p. 115).

²¹ See Al Ghazālī, *The Revival of Religious Science*, A Translation of the Arabic Work *Ihyā 'ulūm al-dīn* by Bankey Behari, with a Foreword by Shree Humayun Kabir (Farnham: Sufi Publishing, 1972 [1964]), specifically 'Book One: Worship', pp. 1-35, Section '7: The Esoteric Import of Pilgrimage (Haj): Virtue Behind Pilgrimage to Medina and Mecca', pp. 16-17.

²² See *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr: Being the Chronicle of a Mediaeval Spanish Moor Concerning His Journey to the Egypt of Saladin, the Holy Cities of Arabia, Baghdad the City of the Caliphs, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, and the Norman Kingdom of Sicily*, trans. by R.J.C. Broadhurst, with an Introduction and Notes (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952).

²³ See *The Travels of Ibn Battutah*, abr., intro., and annot. by Tim Mackintosh-Smith (London: Picador, 2003 [2002]). Ibn Battutah's memoirs were called *Tuhfat al-nuzzar fi ghara'ib al-amsar wa aja'ib al-asfar*, or *A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of*

The Travels of Ibn Battutah, Tim Mackintosh-Smith emphasizes the learning process of the Muslim pilgrim. He quotes Ibn Khaldun and the Prophet Muhammad in this context:

‘Travelling in search of knowledge,’ wrote Ibn Battutah’s younger North African contemporary, Ibn Khaldun, ‘is absolutely essential for the acquisition of useful learning and of perfection through meeting authoritative teachers and having contact with scholarly personalities.’ The Prophet Muhammad had put it more snappily, ‘Travel in search of knowledge, even though the journey takes you to China.’²⁴

The ‘travel in search of knowledge’ is at the centre of the hajj.

The pilgrimage to Mecca acquires, however, a different meaning for disguised Muslims, nineteenth-century Western travellers such as the Swiss traveller Johann Ludwig [John Lewis] Burckhardt, whose hajj took place in 1814,²⁵ or Sir Richard Francis Burton, who travelled to Mecca in 1853. Imperial travellers such as Burton aimed at getting behind the secrets and mysteries of Muslim belief by experiencing them themselves, and relaying them to an audience that stayed at home.²⁶ Despite their perfect disguise, their observations remained those of outsiders, of ethnologists who recorded rather than spiritually participated in the rituals of their fellow pilgrims. Here, travelling as learning means acquiring knowledge in order to grasp the Other rather than to learn as a form of worship.

In the twentieth century, Malcolm X was one of the most prominent Muslims to undertake the hajj. His conversion to Islam meant more than a personal decision for a particular faith: his affiliation to the ‘Nation of Islam’ represented a step

Travelling (see Tim Mackintosh-Smith, ‘Foreword’, in *The Travels of Ibn Battutah*, pp. vii–xviii (p. ix)).

²⁴ Ibid., p. x.

²⁵ See *Travels in Arabia: Comprehending an Account of Those Territories in Hedjaz Which the Mohammedan Regard as Sacred*, by the Late John Lewis Burckhardt, published by the Authority of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior of Africa (London: Colburn, 1829; repr. in *Publications of the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science*, ed. by Fuat Sezgin, *The Islamic World in Foreign Travel Accounts*, 43 (Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang University Frankfurt am Main, 1995)).

²⁶ See Richard F. Burton, *A Secret Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina*, intro. by Tim Mackintosh-Smith (London: The Folio Society, 2004), p. 1 (originally publ. as *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Meccah* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855–56)). Ilija Trojanow has had a long-term interest in Burton which he (semi-)fictionalized in two publications: *Der Weltensammler* [*The Collector of Worlds*] (Munich: Hanser, 2006), and *Nomade auf vier Kontinenten: Auf den Spuren von Sir Richard Francis Burton* [*Nomad on Four Continents: Tracing Sir Richard Francis Burton*], Die andere Bibliothek, 269 (Frankfurt a.M.: Eichborn, 2007).

towards solving the 'race problem' in America by fighting for the Afro-American's 'complete separation from white American and European hegemony'. Yet this religious as well as black movement later became too radical for Malcolm X when it proposed an 'independent nationhood for African Americans',²⁷ and he eventually distanced himself from it.

On his hajj, which he undertook in 1964, Malcolm X vividly experienced the 'Oneness of Man under One God', which is highlighted by his celebration of the Muslim community, of 'brotherhood'.²⁸ For Malcolm X, Islam, including fulfilling his duties as a devout Muslim by, for example, going on the hajj, acquires another, a political and thus secular meaning: it becomes a means for his personal struggle against racial inequality and discrimination by consciously referring to the idea of Islam as an all-embracing religion.

There are, then, multiple forms of the hajj. This chapter compares two different ways of travelling to Islam and writing about this journey. Ilija Trojanow's account of his traditional hajj, *Zu den Heiligen Quellen des Islam: Als Pilger nach Mekka und Medina* (2003),²⁹ portrays his immediate experience of Islam. As a Muslim, he not only performs the hajj as part of his religious duties, but also as the fulfilment of his longing for the unique experience of being a member of the *umma* (the community of believers) that celebrates its unity in its original 'homeland'. This relationship between the individual and the community is explored from a different perspective in V.S. Naipaul's account of his travels to non-Arab Muslim countries, *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981)³⁰ and *Beyond Belief: Islamic*

²⁷ Kofi Natambu, *The Life and Work of Malcolm X*, Critical Lives (Indianapolis: Alpha, 2002), p. 127 and p. 226.

²⁸ Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, with the Assistance of Alex Haley. With an Introduction by Paul Gilroy, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin by arrangement with Hutchinson, 2001 [1965]), p. 443 and p. 452.

²⁹ Ilija Trojanow, *Zu den heiligen Quellen des Islam: Als Pilger nach Mekka und Medina* (Munich: Malik, 2004), henceforth abbreviated to '*Quellen*'; further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

Translations taken from Ilija Trojanow, *Mumbai to Mecca*, Armchair Traveller, trans. by Rebecca Morrison (London: Haus Publishing, 2007), henceforth referred to as *Mumbai*; further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text and footnotes.

³⁰ V.S. Naipaul, *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (London: Picador, 2003 [1981]), henceforth abbreviated to '*Among*'; further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

Excursions Among the Converted Peoples (1996).³¹ Naipaul is a secular Hindu, and his desire to find out why Islam has been able to gain such a significant status is at the centre of his books. His 'pilgrimage' can be described as a journey to the Other in order to 'grasp' it in a way which is partly reminiscent of Orientalist practices of 'conquering'. (I shall explain in more detail later what I mean by that.) The texts deal with different versions of 'pilgrimage' to which the travellers attach opposite meanings: whereas Trojanow as pilgrim seeks his religious roots in Islam's 'homeland' and a spiritual experience which is fundamental to Islam, Naipaul as a travel writer who is mentally detached from his temporary surroundings tends to explore the religious consciousness of Muslims in non-Arab countries from an outsider's perspective.

Both Trojanow and Naipaul are of migratory backgrounds, which they partly reflect on in their travel writing. Although they solely visit the countries of their journeys, they also interact with the notion of migration, through the people they meet, yet also through their own considerations of 'home'. However, despite sharing a peripatetic lifestyle, the writers have opposing ideas on travelling and perceiving the world.

Trojanow notably receives Naipaul. A comparison between the two writers will therefore highlight the writers' different stances on being a traveller and writer, and the wider perception of these positions. As an arguably culturally more open writer and a Muslim, Trojanow does not hide his critique of Naipaul. According to him, Naipaul does not seem to have the 'kulturelle[s] Einfühlungsvermögen' (*Quellen*, p. 160) ('cultural empathy'),³² which (as a widely travelled writer of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with a supposed awareness for and acceptance of cultural difference) should reflect in his travel writing. Trojanow emphatically does not see himself in line with Naipaul as a travel writer: he does not feel a 'Brüderschaft' (*Quellen*, p. 159) ('brotherhood'; *Mumbai*, p. 199) with him as he does with other hajj writers. Trojanow makes a clear moral distinction between

³¹ V.S. Naipaul, *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples* (London: Abacus, 1999 [1998] [2002 printing]), henceforth abbreviated to '*Beyond*'; further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

³² 'Kulturelles Einfühlungsvermögen' ('cultural empathy') and the passage on V.S. Naipaul are not translated in *Mumbai to Mecca*.

writers who travel in order to truly interact with the Other and writers who seem to use the Other for their own purposes like Naipaul.

We should, however, keep in mind that Naipaul is a non-Muslim writer, which, in his case, might suggest a more critical and less sympathetic view on Islam. Naipaul has lived in the West since 1950, yet those critics whose judgements on writers are based on fixed categories that emphasize a writer's origin, not his/her placement in a particular literary tradition, largely do not accept him as a 'Western writer'. This concept highlights the idea of originating from the West and therefore the ability to take on a critical stance on non-Western cultures. It does not include writers such as Naipaul whose writing is largely grounded in Western traditions such as travel writing (outlined above). In the light of this tradition and Naipaul's perception as an Other by many critics (something he seems to fail to recognize), his view on the Muslim world can, therefore, be regarded as an outsider's view on the outside. Thus, Naipaul holds an unusual position within this discourse. His view on the Muslim Other is Western; yet, not originating from Britain, he is 'not allowed' to represent the West,³³ as if Western critics wanted to distance themselves from his resolute ideas. They still often uncritically label Naipaul as a *Mimic Man*, someone who is not allowed to enter the West completely, yet who has struggled to become part of it.³⁴ These critics tend to overlook that Naipaul has contributed to Western literary traditions.

Furthermore, although Naipaul is a highly acclaimed writer, he has attracted much criticism with his publication of *Among the Believers* and *Beyond Belief*. He has been reproached for his seemingly partial perception of the countries he travels in. His 'bookishness', and, by extension, his aloofness after having experienced what it means to come from the non-Western world and to 'make it' in the West, is often regarded the cause of Naipaul's extremely pro-Western attitude. This goes hand in

³³ For example, Edward W. Said, 'An Intellectual Catastrophe', *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 06-12 August 1998 <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/1998/389/cu1.htm>> [accessed 26 January 2006] (para. 3 of 9): 'He [Naipaul] is a man of the Third World'.

³⁴ See Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', in *The Location of Culture* (see Bhabha, above), pp. 85-92, where he discusses the 'ambivalence of mimicry', the 'almost the same, but not quite' (p. 86; original emphasis) of the (former) colonial. Bhabha's title is derived from Naipaul's novel *The Mimic Men: A Novel* (London: Picador, 2002 [1967]) which describes a former colonial's dilemma of wishing to conform to the (imperial) centre's standard and becoming part of it. Naipaul himself went through this process as he illustrates in his semi-autobiographical novel *The Enigma of Arrival: A Novel in Five Sections* (London: Picador, 2002 [1987]).

hand with his emphasis on the 'writer's "authority"', which is not part of the 'ethics of writing and reading about non-western worlds'.³⁵ Particularly Muslims have felt that Naipaul misrepresented their religion as well as themselves as believers; he did not give enough credit to them.³⁶ Consequently, many literary critics in Muslim countries have felt the need to defend their religion.³⁷

In the following, I determine the writers' diverse modes of going on their individual pilgrimages and the different intentions of their travel accounts. I ask in particular which aspects of Islam are emphasized, and by what means.

2.1.1 The Writers' Objectives

Any journey that results in a written account is likely to have a particular objective and might even be undertaken entirely in order to produce a piece of writing. In the West, the interest in the Middle East has a long tradition: as the Biblical Holy Land it has attracted Christian pilgrims and explorers.³⁸ It was then part of various imperial aspirations and thus also often revealed the colonizer's and traveller's own desires and needs.³⁹ The Eurocentric view of the Orient has been challenged since then but, as I shall point out in the analysis of the texts, certain ideas of what the (Middle) East means still persist: even the collapse of the European empires and subsequent immigration movements to the former 'mother countries', which has entailed a growing interest in travel writing, could barely loosen fixed ideas of the Oriental Other.⁴⁰

³⁵ Mustafa, *V.S. Naipaul*, p. 27; original emphasis.

³⁶ For example, Mohammed Ayub Khan, 'A Nobel for Islamophobia', *The Milli Gazette*, 2.22 <<http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/15112001/29.htm>> [accessed 26 January 2006] (10 para.).

³⁷ For example, Mursi Saad El-Din, 'Plain Talk', *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 18-24 October 2001 <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/556/cu3.htm>> [accessed 27 January 2006] (10 para.).

³⁸ For further information on the Christian pilgrimage and the importance of holy places in a Christian context, see Barbara Korte, *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*, trans. by Catherine Matthias (Basingstoke: Macmillan Palgrave, 2000), pp. 24-25 (originally publ. as *Der englische Reisebericht: Von der Pilgerfahrt bis zur Postmoderne* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996)).

³⁹ For a detailed discussion of the Western interest and conceptions in the Orient see Said, *Orientalism*.

⁴⁰ See Mary Baine Campbell, 'Travel Writing and Its Theory', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (see Rubiés, above), pp. 261-278 (p. 261).

V.S. Naipaul's visits to non-Arab Muslim countries are a travel writer's journeys which aim at discovering and revealing knowledge and 'truth' through both the actual journey and the subsequent acts of taking notes and writing. The mutual dependency of travelling and writing is significant for Naipaul. In the prologue of *Beyond Belief* he tells us:

This is a book about people. It is not a book of opinion. It is a book of stories. [...] This book is a follow-up to a book [...], *Among the Believers* [...]. When I started on this journey in 1979 I knew almost nothing about Islam – it is the best way to start on a venture – and that first book was an exploration of the details of the faith and what looked like its capacity for revolution. The theme of conversion was always there; but I didn't see it as clearly as I saw it on this second journey. (*Beyond*, p. 1)

Naipaul suggests that it was his aim to gain knowledge about Islam with a particular focus on the 'theme of conversion' (this central notion even appears in the subtitle of *Beyond Belief*). He consciously re-visits the places known from his first journey, which resulted in a text, *Among the Believers*. Yet the focus of his exploration in *Beyond Belief* seems to have shifted slightly. This shift in emphasis appears to have been caused by the actual act of writing, of reflection on the journey as well as by the simple idea that, particularly after a time gap of several years, one never sees a place with the 'same eyes' again. Suman Gupta points out that the central question of *Among the Believers* is: 'in what way do Muslims expect Islam to facilitate the creation of an ideal Islamic state, and what sort of concrete shape (in economic, technological and political terms) is the latter likely to take?'⁴¹ I regard Naipaul's objective in both books as the exploration of what he describes as the 'Muslim rage',⁴² 'rage about the faith, political rage' (*Among*, p. 400), against which he – a Western-educated cosmopolitan traveller – sees himself in relief. His writing explores, therefore, not simply the Other (the Muslims) but also the Self (the secular 'Westerner' Naipaul) in relation to the question of religious revivalism. He modifies his method of exploration between his first and second travel accounts as he increasingly perceives the notion of conversion as a possible answer to his questions

⁴¹ Gupta, *V.S. Naipaul*, p. 67.

⁴² V.S. Naipaul, 'Our Universal Civilization' (1992), in *Literary Occasions: Essays*, intro. and ed. by Pankaj Mishra (London: Picador, 2003), pp. 503-17 (p. 507).

regarding 'Muslim rage', and as the thematic focus for his travelling and writing. As Gupta points out, *Among the Believers* has 'an exploratory air [...]: it comes to its subject matter with an assumption of ignorance, and the process of putting together and thinking about observations as they occur forms the substance of the book', whereas *Beyond Belief*, written fifteen years later, carries 'an air of retrospection [...]: it is more statemental in approach, and presents a concretised and confirmed thesis about Islam itself and about the general issues in question.'⁴³ Although I do not have the space to analyse the differences in approach in the two books, Naipaul's methodology shifts from 'the writing of enquiry'⁴⁴ to what I shall call 'the writing of confirmation', which has Orientalist connotations: Naipaul's books appear to make the Orient available by evoking and repeating stereotypes and culturally preconditioned Western knowledge.⁴⁵

Naipaul's desire to visit non-Arab Muslim countries is triggered by watching news about the Iranian Revolution on television. One could regard this news item as a 'pretext',⁴⁶ which, in imperial times, triggered the wish in imperial travellers to see the colonies with their own eyes in order to gain knowledge about them and their people. Additionally, Naipaul's travel accounts express a political aspect, which could also be the focus of colonial travel writing. Peter Hulme points out that 'given that the world is constantly in flux, there is still a prominent place for the mixture of personal reportage and socio-political analysis which has been a component of travel writing since its earliest days.'⁴⁷ Naipaul's initial objective (the inquiry into the religiousness of 'the converted peoples') implies this kind of link between personal interest and political analysis. In 'Our Universal Civilization', an address that Naipaul gave at the Manhattan Institute of New York and that focuses on his

⁴³ Gupta, *V.S. Naipaul*, p. 66.

⁴⁴ Robyn Davidson, 'Introduction', in *The Picador Book of Journeys*, ed. by Robyn Davidson (London: Picador, 2001), pp. 1-7 (p. 5); this is Naipaul's own term qtd. by Davidson.

⁴⁵ See Said, *Orientalism*, p. 197: 'Orientalism, which is the system of the European or Western knowledge about the Orient, thus becomes synonymous with European domination of the Orient'. See also Bhabha's discussion of stereotypes as a means of dominating and holding the Other in place in 'The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism', in *The Location of Culture* (see Bhabha, above), pp. 66-84.

⁴⁶ See Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 37. Rob Nixon also argues that Naipaul has the 'Weltanschauung of a secular Hindu West Indian would-be-Victorian (obsessed with finding confirmation for his judgements)' (Nixon, *London Calling*, p. 45).

⁴⁷ Peter Hulme, 'Travelling to Write (1940-2000)', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, see Rubiés, above), pp. 87-101 (p. 94).

interaction with Islam, he describes this connection by reflecting upon the word 'fundamentalism' as it is used in the media and, consequently, by asking himself why Islam seems to grow stronger in a number of non-Arab Muslim countries.

'Fundamentalism' – in connection with the Mohammedan world – was not a word often used by the newspapers in 1979; they hadn't yet worked through that concept. What they spoke of more was 'the revival of Islam.' And that, indeed, to anyone contemplating it from a distance, was a puzzle. Islam which had apparently so little to offer its adherents in the last century and in the first half of this – what did it have to offer an infinitely more educated, infinitely faster, world in the later years of the century?⁴⁸

Naipaul seems to claim that he wants to reach beyond the superficial representation of Islam in the media by travelling to the parts of the Muslim world that 'revive' Islam. However, one needs to take into account what Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan emphasize: that 'travel writing frequently provides an effective alibi for the perpetuation or reinstallation of ethnocentrally superior attitudes to "other" cultures, peoples, and places.'⁴⁹ I read Naipaul's statement in this light: the word 'Mohammedan' nowadays is obsolete as it reduces Islam exclusively to its origins and seems to deny its development, transformation, and adaptation in other parts of the Muslim world. Furthermore, the statement that the media have not worked through the concept of 'fundamentalism' produces the impression that Naipaul, by contrast, understands this concept by travelling to the places where it flourishes. He perceives himself as a knowledgeable traveller. I see, therefore, a link between Naipaul's possible confirmation of previously achieved opinions and the writer himself. He states, 'I had trouble with the form. [...] I had trouble with the "I" of the travel writer; I thought that as traveller and narrator he was in unchallenged command and had to make big judgements. [...] Travel had taken me further.'⁵⁰ It remains to be seen whether, and how, travel takes Naipaul further, and whether he resists the temptation of 'making big judgements'.

Ilija Trojanow's objective is of a different nature from Naipaul's. He goes on the hajj primarily for religious purposes and subsequently writes about his

⁴⁸ Naipaul, 'Our Universal Civilization', pp. 503-17 (pp. 507-08).

⁴⁹ Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters*, p. xiii.

⁵⁰ V.S. Naipaul, 'Reading and Writing: A Personal Account' (1998), in *Literary Occasions* (see Naipaul, above), pp. 3-31 (p. 7).

experiences on this journey. The book is not presented as pre-planned: he, unlike Naipaul, appears to travel without a notebook, yet being a writer by profession, this is questionable. The journey itself and the spiritual experience of the pilgrim seem to be more significant than answering particular questions or gaining knowledge. The religious duty of going on the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a Muslim's lifetime stands at the forefront of Trojanow's text. The hajj places the pilgrim more consciously in the community of believers. Trojanow has travelled widely and has always aimed at 'turning the foreign into a home'.⁵¹ Being a Muslim, he, on the one hand, knows all the rules he needs to follow (on the hajj as well as in everyday life), yet, on the other, he acquires a more conscious understanding of the meaning of the religious rituals when he performs them in the land of Islam's origin. He writes, 'Jede Reise beginnt vor ihrem Antritt, auf die Hadsch aber, die Pilgerfahrt nach Mekka, bereitet sich der Gläubige ein Leben lang vor' (*Quellen*, p. 14).⁵² This sentence already summarizes the significance of the Muslim pilgrimage as opposed to other forms of travelling. The perpetual awareness of the existence of Mecca and of one's religious roots that is maintained by, for example, praying towards Mecca, and the constant knowledge from a very early age that one has to go on this pilgrimage to fulfil the duties of a devout Muslim appear as a lifelong preparation for this journey. Trojanow also uses the word 'sehnen' (*Quellen*, p. 14) ('yearn[ing]'; *Mumbai*, p. 13) (an indescribable, mystical love for or feeling of desire for experiencing his religion at its roots), for this kind of mental preparation. The pilgrimage starts long before the actual boarding of the plane. It starts and continues as a journey of the mind of the believer. Yet 'die Hadsch ist nicht nur eine individuelle Pilgerschaft, sondern auch eine Versammlung Gleicher, eine Beschwörung der Umma, der muslimischen Gemeinschaft' (*Quellen*, p. 15).⁵³ It is

⁵¹ Trojanow in Christoph Bock, 'Ortswechsel: Interview mit Michael Ebmeier und Ilija Trojanow', *Parapluie*, no. 19: *Worte, Worte, Worte* <<http://parapluie.de/archiv/worte/ortswechsel>> [accessed 08 Dec. 2004] (para. 9 of 53): 'Am wichtigsten erscheint mir, nicht von der Heimat in die Fremde und wieder zurück zu reisen, sondern die Fremde in Heimat zu verwandeln, sinnlich, sprachlich.' ('The most important thing seems to me not to travel from home to foreign lands and back, but to turn the foreign into a home, sensually, linguistically.').

⁵² 'Every journey begins before one sets off on it; preparation for the Hajj, for the pilgrimage to Mecca, is a believer's vocation and the rewards for his life's work' (*Mumbai*, p. 12).

⁵³ 'For the Hajj is not only an individual pilgrimage, it is a communal congregation, an entreaty of the Ummah' (*Mumbai*, pp. 13-14).

precisely this unique relationship between the individual Muslim and his/her role in the community of believers that Trojanow explores, taking himself as an example.

2.1.2 The Travel Writer and His 'Subjects'

As both Trojanow and Naipaul mention people in their titles ('Pilger' ('pilgrim'), 'believers', 'converted peoples') interpersonal relations provide the basis for their experiences of Islam on both a personal and a politico-historical level.

Naipaul primarily meets carefully selected people by appointment. He is a rich traveller who can afford to interview the people who appear to be useful for his 'quest for knowledge'. His interlocutors serve a particular purpose: they tell Naipaul what he wants to hear – and what he already knows. For example, regarding the Islamic Revolution and its impact on Iran's history and culture, Naipaul lets Paydar, a communist whom he meets in Tehran, say: 'We may win the revolution, but culturally we will go back a thousand years' (*Beyond*, p. 194). As I shall describe in more detail later, the notion of Islam's backwardness is a key point in Naipaul's argument for a 'universal [Western oriented; F.M.] civilization' of which the countries that put an increased emphasis on Islam do not seem to be part.⁵⁴

However, despite Naipaul's confidence in his previously acquired knowledge, he also relies on the people he meets on his journeys as mediators, as translators,⁵⁵ and helpers – a notion he recognizes himself: 'it became clear that I needed help, that by myself I would see nothing' (*Among*, p. 117). They sometimes even change Naipaul's perceptions of places and question his preconditioned opinions. Naipaul's encounters with Behzad in Iran are significant here. He writes, 'without Behzad, without the access to the language that he gave me, I had been like a half-blind man in Tehran. [...] Now, with Behzad, the walls spoke; many other things took on meaning; and the city changed' (*Among*, p. 7). Naipaul's reliance on people who provide access to the places he visits result in a translated view of the countries he

⁵⁴ See Naipaul, 'Our Universal Civilization', pp. 503-17.

⁵⁵ See Cronin's *Across the Lines* on the role of translation in travel. Cronin points out many aspects of translation, for example, 'the fear of ridicule, vulnerability and helplessness' of the traveller who does not know the language (p. 43) and the help of informants (p. 54). Cronin also refers to Naipaul's employing of interpreters (pp. 72-73).

travels in. Here, Behzad literally translates Persian words into English, yet the question is whether he can communicate the specific cultural meanings behind those words to Naipaul. It is a translated view which fills the gaps in Naipaul's previously acquired knowledge. Naipaul has some sort of sense of the cultural implications of 'speaking walls' in a post-revolutionary country, and he communicates to his readers how he interprets these translations. Yet whether Naipaul's interpretations are the same as Behzad's, an Iranian's, not an outsider's, perception of these graffiti the reader never learns.⁵⁶

Naipaul also functions as a translator for his own cause. He directs and extensively comments on the conversations he conducts with his 'subjects'. Dialogues dominate the books. For example, when talking to Shafi in Malaysia, who 'worked for the Muslim cause' (*Among*, p. 266), Naipaul controls the conversation with his questions:

I said, 'Do you think those white women are pretty?'
 He looked at them one after the other, with the same serious expression: he was trying hard to find out what he thought.
 He said, 'We don't have a sense of comparing.'
 'But white men and others find Malay women pretty.'
 'I have heard that. But is it true? Is that really what they feel?'
 [...] It was not easy for Shafi, though the effort of thought and memory excited him. The narrative that came out was shaped by my questions.
 (*Among*, p. 274)

This kind of conversation, which is directed towards the teasing out of a particular piece of information, frequently appears in Naipaul's texts. He tries to extract the answers he expects from his interlocutor. However, Naipaul admits that 'the narrative [...] was shaped by [his] questions' and is therefore aware of the distorting effect of the interviewer-interviewee relationship. Nonetheless, this practice gives him authority as a traveller, but also as a writer: Naipaul asks in order to lead the conversation into a particular direction. He modifies the representation of his interlocutors with his questions, thereby placing them and himself in the positions of represented and representer. Yet these practices are not specific to Naipaul and have

⁵⁶ Cronin refers to this problem in *ibid.*, p. 74: 'When a cultural reality is interpreted by the interpreter, is the traveller getting the benefit of measured judgement with general applicability or personal opinions disguised as cultural generalities?'

always (more or less obviously) been part of European travel literature, particularly in imperial travel writing.⁵⁷ Naipaul appears to make use of them when he already seems to think about the 'narrative' that will be the result of his journey.

A further notion behind the use of dialogue needs to be considered. Susan Bassnett observes that 'the increasing use of dialogue in travel writing has further closed the gap between travel account and fiction, making the travel text resemble the novel much more closely.' She relates this observation to the use of language in travel accounts since 'the reader is expected to believe that such conversations which apparently transcend any language barrier are recorded rather than invented.'⁵⁸ Naipaul solves this problem by the frequent reference to translators who superficially erase communication difficulties, and the use of his notebook which will later bridge any gaps of his memory and any gaps of understanding for his readers who have not been to these countries and met these people. Naipaul's relationship to translation is, therefore, twofold: on the one hand, he needs translators as providers of access to the form of Islam as it is lived in particular countries; on the other, he takes on the role of translator himself, by filtering his as well as his companions' experiences for his readers through the act of writing. He teaches his readers what he knows, and simultaneously teaches the people he talks to whilst relativizing their knowledge: he often sets his knowledge in opposition to theirs.⁵⁹ Naipaul gives the impression that he already knows his subjects; Edward W. Said calls this 'knowledge reinforced by the colonial encounter as well as by the widespread interest in the alien and

⁵⁷ See as an example for earlier travel writing Charles de Secondat Baron de Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (originally publ. Amsterdam: P. Brunel, 1721). Although supposedly describing Europe from an 'Eastern' point of view, the *Letters* primarily give an Orientalist, well-known and familiar picture of Persia by combining 'the exotic and the erotic' thus helping 'to build up the fascination of the East by concentrating on the cruelty and strangeness of Persian customs, often adding to the effect by means of what was then considered to be a flowery Eastern style [...]. Persia is sometimes horrifying, sometimes admirable' (Christopher J. Betts, 'Introduction', in Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, trans. with an Introduction and Notes by Christopher J. Betts, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 1973 [2004(?) printing]), pp. 17-33 (p. 21)). See also Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* for further discussion of travel writing's colonialist heritage.

⁵⁸ Bassnett, 'Travel Writing and Gender', pp. 225-41 (p. 235).

⁵⁹ These techniques of teaching both the people the travel writers meets on his journeys and his readers is a common feature in travel writing. See as an earlier example Adam Olearius's *Moskowitzische und persische Reise: Die holsteinische Gesandtschaft beim Schah 1633-39* [*Moscowian and Persian Journey: The Holstein Delegation Visiting the Shah 1633-39*] (Schleswig 1647), ed. by Detlef Haberland, *Alte abenteuerliche Reiseberichte* (Stuttgart: Edition Erdmann in Thienemann, 1986).

unusual'.⁶⁰ The notion of knowing goes hand in hand with what Naipaul regards as the role of the writer and the importance of this profession. On the one hand, Naipaul sets out to learn about Islam, yet, on the other, he imposes his own knowledge on his 'subjects', as well as on his readers by producing a travel account.

Naipaul's writing is, therefore, reminiscent of an anthropologist's approach to his subjects. Melman observes that in the 'ethnography of modern everyday life', the 'experience of travel is primarily textual',⁶¹ which also holds true for Naipaul: like an ethnographer, he interprets what he sees and simultaneously follows a 'desire for systematicity and precision'.⁶² As he represents the people he meets, he produces and reproduces their culture⁶³ – as far as his conversational partners let him:

And yet, after an hour of eating fruit and drinking tea and talking, I had got nothing new from Abbas, had not been able to get beyond his gaze and what seemed to be his formality and pride; had not been moved to make a note or even to take my notebook out from the breast-pocket of my jacket. And when the electricity failed in the neighbourhood, and everything was suddenly dark all around, it seemed time to leave. (*Beyond*, p. 202)

Naipaul frequently points out that the taking of notes is a significant part of his journey. In this instance, however, Naipaul fails to 'read' his 'subject' and therefore to take notes, or his 'subject' fails to give him the material he could use for his book. This is a temporarily disturbing experience for Naipaul, as he likes to get to the bottom of the visited countries' consciousness. Said suggests that

many writers of travel books and guidebooks compose them in order to say that a country *is* like this, or better, that it *is* colorful, expensive, interesting, and so forth. The idea [...] is that people, places, and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes.⁶⁴

Naipaul as travel writer and the books he produces demonstrate a great authority: the statemental nature of his writing becomes particularly apparent in *Beyond Belief*. By

⁶⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 39-40.

⁶¹ Melman, 'The Middle East/Arabia', pp. 105-21 (p. 110).

⁶² Rubiés, 'Travel Writing and Ethnography', pp. 242-260 (pp. 252-3).

⁶³ Bachmann-Medick, 'Einleitung' to *Kultur als Text*, pp. 7-64 (p. 28): 'Kultur wird produziert und reproduziert, indem sie repräsentiert'.

⁶⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 93; original emphasis.

describing how he takes notes and transfers his experiences into a piece of writing, he puts more emphasis on the process of producing a book. This book is based on his perceptions of the people, including their religion, and reflects, therefore, less the possible transformation of his knowledge and opinions. Naipaul thereby gives the impression that the result of his journey, the book, is at least as significant as the actual journey.

Trojanow, who, as we have seen, on his journey, claims to perceive himself as a writer to a limited extent only, acts as a translator-teacher for his readers as he takes them through the rituals of the hajj: he explains which ritual a Muslim has to perform and when and why. However, he also consciously seeks the help and advice of people he meets on his journeys. Throughout his travel account, Trojanow describes encounters with more experienced Muslims who help him find an even more immediate access to his religion than he currently has. Trojanow is European, which makes him a less experienced Muslim, but he is fully embraced by the more experienced Muslims. He already seeks advice in India whilst preparing for the hajj. The notion of translation (as a form of transferring and re-appropriating knowledge and experience from one person to another rather than a one-to-one transmission) is positively connoted for Trojanow: he is eager to learn about Islam through the transferral of spiritual understanding by more experienced Muslims. In contrast, Naipaul primarily requires translators as a vehicle for gaining access to inside knowledge: this aim is as acceptable as Trojanow's, particularly for a travel writer, who wishes to provide new insights into, and therefore possibly more understanding for, a country. By relating to 'translators', Trojanow stresses the importance of teachers and education in Islam, a major aspect of Muslim worship.⁶⁵

Badrubhai betete, als ich das Zelt betrat. Sein Kopf schwang rhythmisch von einer Seite zur anderen, die Worte wurden heftig gesetzt, rasant betont, die Stimme schien aus der Brust zu brechen.

Zeige mir dieses Gebet, bat ich ihn, als er sich aus der Sitzstellung gelöst und auf seiner Decke ausgestreckt hatte.

Ich kann es dir nicht beibringen, du bist dafür noch nicht weit genug fortgeschritten, sagte er, erklärte es mir dann aber doch: Das Gebet fängt im

⁶⁵ See Sardar, *Desperately Seeking Paradise*, p. 209: 'Thus, Islam does not only make the pursuit of knowledge obligatory but also connects it with the unique Islamic notion of worship: *ilm*, the term for knowledge, is a form of *ibadah* (worship)'.

Herzen an. Du mußt alles aus deinem Herzen verbannen außer Allah.
(*Quellen*, p. 114)⁶⁶

Although the act of praying is part of a Muslim's everyday life, it simultaneously is part of his/her lifelong learning process. Furthermore, despite the fact that the act of praying is an individual one, it is with the help of teachers (with other believers) that a 'real' spiritual experience can be achieved. Trojanow depicts this interaction between the individual and the teacher as a significant notion in Islam.⁶⁷

A notion that is strongly associated with the role of teachers and the kind of (spiritual) experience they might initiate are the different attitudes towards education: whereas Naipaul focuses on Western education as the bringer of 'enlightenment', Trojanow as an educated Westerner *and* Muslim values other forms of knowledge, such as Islamic knowledge which does not have the same status for Naipaul. The latter writes:

Mr Wahid praised him while he stood before us and said he was thirty and knew a lot of the Koran by heart. I said it was marvellous, knowing the Koran by heart. 'Half,' Mr Wahid said. 'Half.' And, considering the hunched man before us who had little else to do, I said with some sternness that it wasn't good enough. (*Beyond*, p. 29)

With his jovially 'stern' comment 'it wasn't good enough', Naipaul humours Mr Wahid's appraisal of the man's knowledge of the Qur'an. He uses irony as a way to distance himself from what he regards as his interlocutor's seriousness and exaggerated pride. Having moved to Britain for educational purposes, Naipaul, the former colonial, cherishes the intellectual engagement with the world as a way leading out of the inferior position of the colonial in relation to the former

⁶⁶ 'Badrubhai was praying when I entered the tent. His head was swinging rhythmically from one side to the other, the words were pronounced with precision and terrific emphasis; his voice came from deep within his chest.

"Show me this prayer," I asked him when he moved from his seated position and stretched out on his blanket.

"I can't teach it to you, you are not advanced enough yet," he said, but then he explained it to me nonetheless: "The prayer begins in the heart. You have to cleanse your heart of everything apart from Allah." (*Mumbai*, p. 143).

⁶⁷ Teachers as important guides in religious life are also relevant for Sardar. See *Desperately Seeking Paradise*, p. 45: '[The father] began after some time, "you need two things: a teacher, like a tall and strong fruit-bearing tree, under whose protection you acquire the knowledge of classical disciplines. [...] If you are seeking paradise, you have to go to someone who is qualified enough to show you the right direction"'.

colonizers.⁶⁸ Since he managed to leave his former, naïve self behind by having studied and learned, his humour seems to support his assumed intellectual superiority based on his estimation of knowledge. He does not question Islamic knowledge as such, yet he does not see his expectations of knowledgeable Muslims fulfilled here.

Trojanow, in contrast, takes a more naïve approach to the Islamic heritage than Naipaul: the approach of the believer who is possibly less critical of his religion than an outsider to Islam, a non-Muslim. That does not, however, make him a more open traveller and writer about Islam – he is closed in a different, less reflective way than Naipaul: the hajj is the ultimate celebration of being part of the Muslim community, and he would, therefore, like to return to the overwhelming atmosphere of the hajj through the act of writing as if to remind himself of what it was like to be a Muslim on this journey. He writes, ‘Nicht nur aus Neugier sollte ich einige Monate später nach Deoband reisen; ich hoffte, zu der beglückenden Stimmung der Hadsch, zu Ruhe und Konzentration zurückzufinden’ (*Quellen*, p. 126).⁶⁹ ‘Ruhe und Konzentration’ (‘serenity and contented state of mind’) are concepts which are part of most religions and thereby do not distinguish one religion from another, such as Islam from Christianity. Back in India, Trojanow is primarily trying to find ways of re-living serenity, the here quintessentially Muslim experience of the hajj, which is another indicator for the lifelong influence of the hajj (its preparation and afterglow) on a Muslim’s existence.

Trojanow travels in order to experience the unique celebration of the community of believers and thus, one could argue, also wishes to see his positive attitude towards the *umma* confirmed. Thus in contrast to Naipaul, Trojanow largely regards the relationships with the people he meets on his journey as a uniting and not as a dividing experience. This notion is already externally emphasized by the same dress, the *ihram*, which is the state of purity – a form of inner immersion – which each pilgrim has to take on before performing the rituals of the hajj and which both formally and spiritually associates them with Islam.

⁶⁸ Naipaul describes his move to England and his education as a way of gaining acceptance in Britain in *The Enigma of Arrival*, p. 93.

⁶⁹ ‘It wasn’t curiosity alone that led me to Deoband a few months later [...]; I was hoping to recapture some of the serenity and the contented state of mind I had experienced on the Hajj’ (*Mumbai*, p. 158).

Both Trojanow and Naipaul meet their subjects in 'contact zones'.⁷⁰ For Naipaul, contact zones are created by the common experiences he, his younger self, shares with many of his interlocutors: a kind of naïvity and ignorance that Naipaul has overcome but can still identify with. However, there are occasions when these contact zones do not work; this prevents Naipaul from gaining the inside knowledge that he aims for:

I couldn't enter his [Idrees'] faith. But in that room, as he lost his anxieties, I felt tenderer towards him. I liked seeing him relaxed on the bed, snatching at peace, carrying the stupendousness of his faith, his belief in the Promised Messiah who had come to cleanse and reveal anew the true religion. [...] it was like being taken far aback. (*Among*, p. 256)

Idrees is a member of the Ahmadis (the 'purest of Muslims'; *Among*, p. 247) in Lahore. As Naipaul is a secular Hindu with a strong sense of his (Indian, Caribbean, and Western) background, he seems to find it difficult to meet his 'subjects' on common ground: he cannot 'enter' their belief system. On the one hand, Naipaul observes his subjects very closely, almost like an anthropologist, – he describes how Idrees gradually relaxes in his presence –, yet, on the other, he deliberately keeps a (mental) distance to secure his 'objectivity' and ability to judge him. In this conversation, it is the 'stupendousness of the faith' (*Among*, p. 256) – a concept that Naipaul defines as the unconditional acceptance and unquestioning celebration of the tremendousness and might of Islam, rather than the greatness of this faith itself – which, to some extent, he also associates with a younger, less experienced, and now detached self who was as impressionable as Idrees still is. Naipaul's limited identification with the Muslims he meets on the basis of his perception of his own former self as a naïve, colonized, and not independently thinking subject ('being taken far aback') will be discussed in further detail below.

In contrast, Trojanow's contact zone is defined in a more egalitarian way: it is a space for all Muslims. Mecca (or the places of pilgrimage in general) and its Great Mosque, the Masjid al-Haram, as the focal point of Islam are at the centre of every

⁷⁰ See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*. I borrow Pratt's term in order to describe solely a space where the traveller and his 'subjects' come into contact, and not to refer to 'the space of colonial encounter' (p. 6), which does not hold true for Trojanow and only partly for Naipaul.

Muslim's consciousness:⁷¹ by praying towards the Ka'ba, yet also by remembering the Muslims on the hajj by slaughtering an animal at exactly the same time as the pilgrims do in Mina, this place is part of every Muslim's life. Trojanow's contact zone reaches beyond a physically separating space: he approaches people's minds without trying to predict what they think, partly because he feels he is one of them:

Die heulenden Stimmen [...] erklangen aus allen Richtungen. [...] Keiner der zwei Millionen stand in dieser Stunde außerhalb des Gebets. Wir nutzten die Zeit [...], um noch einmal um Vergebung zu flehen [...].
[...] Hadsch Mabruk. Die Hadsch galt mit dem Ende dieses islamischen Tages als erfüllt. Unsere Sünden waren vergeben, wir waren wie neugeborene Kinder, und wir durften uns von nun an Hadschis nennen. (*Quellen*, pp. 97-98)⁷²

Trojanow identifies with his 'subjects' (he uses the collective personal pronoun 'wir' ('we'), something the distanced traveller and writer Naipaul would not do): as pilgrims, they are all in the same position and, physically, in the same space. They are united in the religious rituals and have the same aim, the fulfilment of the hajj. Trojanow claims that his interest in his travel companions is about his self-definition as collective and Islamic. He thus places himself in opposition to what he regards as Western travel writing. He writes: 'Der Reiseerzähler, der die Welt um seine Physis und Psyche kreisen läßt, ist ein neueres, westliches Phänomen, das wesentlich dazu beigetragen hat, die Reiseerzählung als literarische Form zu diskreditieren' (*Quellen*, p. 8).⁷³ Trojanow prefers to be seen as part of the Muslim tradition of writing about the hajj, as a form of reflecting upon what it means to be part of the *umma* and not as a form of pure self-exploration in opposition to an Other. However, Trojanow is, like Naipaul, a professional writer, and books are always published with an eye on the

⁷¹ See Gerhard Endress, *Islam: An Historical Introduction*, trans. by Carole Hillenbrand, The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002; first publ. as *An Introduction to Islam*, 1988), p. 84 (originally publ. as *Einführung in die Islamische Geschichte* (Munich: Beck, 1982)).

⁷² 'The wailing voices [...] rang out from every direction. [...] Not one of the two million people was distant from the prayers at this time. We used the time [...] to plead for forgiveness [...]. *Hajj Mabruk*. The Hajj is considered complete at the end of this day. Our sins were forgiven, we were like new-born babies, and from this moment on we could refer to ourselves as Hajjis.' (*Mumbai*, pp. 119-20).

⁷³ 'The travel writer who allows the world to revolve around his own person and psyche is a more recent Western phenomenon [not translated: who has in no small part contributed to travel writing being discredited as a literary form]' (*Mumbai*, p. 2).

market. Nevertheless, the question of audience appears less significant for Trojanow than for Naipaul: he claims to be writing for 'anyone who can read'. His travelogue, which only sold five thousand copies and was, in contrast to Naipaul's travel books, commercially unsuccessful, falls in between audiences: as Trojanow states, Muslims tend to seek hajj guides, whereas non-Muslims seem to regard *Zu den Heiligen Quellen des Islam* as too spiritual in nature.⁷⁴ Despite Trojanow's assertion to write in a specific hajj writing tradition, it needs to be questioned whether he is free of Western practices of travel writing. I therefore draw this section to a close by analysing the interaction between travelling and writing in Naipaul's and Trojanow's travel accounts.

2.1.3 Travelling and Writing: Postcolonial Approaches and the 'Quest for Knowledge'

In this mobile age, notions of travelling, migrating, and nomadism are part of life. The interaction with the Other thus encountered, or an 'other' side which the traveller discovers in him/herself, increasingly shapes people's identities.⁷⁵ Yet it seems that it is not until the textual realization of the journey that the latter is fully experienced. Barbara Korte emphasizes that, in the twentieth century, 'if the journey is found to be significant, this often happens not during the act of travelling itself, but rather at the moment when the journey is textualized. Meaningful travelling experience, for many postmodern travellers, will only emerge with the act of travel writing.'⁷⁶

Both travelling and writing are modes of exploring a new country and/or the Self of the author and try to comprehend what happens around and within the traveller-writer. James Clifford argues,

⁷⁴ Appendix I, 'An Interview with Ilija Trojanow', p. 272.

⁷⁵ Rossana Bonadei, 'Theory into *écriture*: Travel Literature Encounters Touring Cultures', in *Cross-Cultural Travel: Papers from the Royal Irish Academy International Symposium on Literature and Travel, National University of Ireland, Galway, November 2002*, ed. by Jane Couroy, Travel Writing Across Disciplines, Theory and Pedagogy, 7 (New York: Lang), 2003, pp. 417-28 (p. 418).

⁷⁶ Korte, *English Travel Writing*, p. 144; original emphasis.

'Travel,' as I use it, is an inclusive term embracing a range of more or less voluntarist practices of leaving 'home' to go to some 'other' place. [...] The displacement takes place for the purpose of gain – material, spiritual, scientific. It involves obtaining knowledge and/or having an 'experience' [...].⁷⁷

'The purpose of gain' can also be found in writing as a metaphorical journey: the writer's self-exploration. As Michel Butor points out, 'travelling' also takes place 'in order to write'.⁷⁸ By going abroad, writers can find new subject matters and/or develop different perspectives on previously formed opinions. Naipaul places great emphasis on the interrelation between travelling and writing: the former is almost the prerequisite for the latter. He expresses this mutual relationship in 'Our Universal Civilization' as follows:

[...] And if I have to describe the universal civilization I would say it is the civilization that both gave the prompting and the idea of the literary vocation; and also gave the means to fulfill that prompting; the civilization that enabled me to make that journey from the periphery to the centre [...] on whom – as on me – the outer world had worked, and given the ambition to write.⁷⁹

For Naipaul the profession of the writer is closely connected to the migration from the 'periphery' to the 'centre', where he gradually gained the privileged position of the writer. Later he started travelling back to the 'periphery', where he thought he could not have become a writer, in order to write about it.⁸⁰ It seems, therefore, that Naipaul represents a 'prototypical' travel writer, for whom 'travelling is a mode of exploring the world as well as the self. "The literature of travel" thus becomes the expression of a process of experiencing and re-forming in which travelling and writing depend on each other.'⁸¹ This notion is frequently expressed in *Among the*

⁷⁷ Clifford, *Routes*, p. 66.

⁷⁸ Michel Butor, 'Travel and Writing', trans. by John Powers and K. Lisker, *Mosaic*, 8.1 (1974), 1-16, (p. 14) (repr. in *Temperamental Journeys: Essays on the Modern Literature of Travel*, ed. by Michael Kowalewski (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1992), pp. 53-70 (p. 67); originally publ. as *Le voyage et l'écriture, Romantisme*, no. 4 (1972), 4-19).

⁷⁹ Naipaul, 'Our Universal Civilization', pp. 503-17 (pp. 506-07).

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 507. See also Naipaul's semi-autobiographical novel *The Enigma of Arrival* in which he explores how he grew into the existence of the writer.

⁸¹ Schlösser, 'Reiseliteratur als Literatur der Reisenden', p. 15: 'Reisen ist ein Muster der Welterschließung und der Persönlichkeits-Bildung, "Literatur des Reisens" wird so zum Ausdruck eines Erfahrungs- und Gestaltungsprozesses, in dem Reisen und Schreiben einander bedingen'.

Believers and Beyond Belief. Naipaul describes this process in practical terms after having met Shahbaz, a Marxist and revolutionary, in Pakistan:

But I felt that the narrative had become too fast here. I felt when I considered my notes that certain things had been elided. I telephoned Shahbaz; he didn't make difficulties. I went to see him again. I wanted to hear more about him. I wanted to hear more about those very early days in Baluchistan. I wanted to hear more about the first day. (*Beyond*, p. 300)

With this incident, Naipaul describes the act of writing as physically moving towards it (going back to Shahbaz). Travelling enables him to meet people and write about what he is looking for through individual encounters. Naipaul is looking for knowledge through his 'subjects' and he strongly connects the act of travelling with the act of finding writing material.⁸² The travel accounts focus on Naipaul, the writer, rather than on Naipaul, the individual. The reader therefore only gets a one-sided impression of Naipaul who seemingly does not transform by the process of writing his travelogues. However, this might be due to the nature of Naipaul's Western travel writing: Trojanow's hajj writing is about personal change, whereas Naipaul's travel accounts aim to focus on countries and their people. Although Naipaul is the lynchpin of his travelogues, his primary goal is to bring across to his readers the characteristics of the countries he visits (as he perceives them) and not his possible transformations.

Trojanow's bringing together of travelling and writing is of a different nature. He firmly situates himself in the tradition of hajj writing, *rihla*; this comes across as a purely personal journey, yet through the publication of this travel account Trojanow, being a writer, does wish to convey his experiences to a larger audience. He writes:

Dieser Bericht steht in einer alten Tradition. Seit mehr als tausend Jahren existiert der literarische Typus einer Reiseerzählung über die Hadsch, auf arabisch Rihla, auf persisch Safarnameh genannt – Zeugnisse einer Pilgerschaft als Kulmination aller Sehnsüchte, als einzigartige Aus-Zeit, so

⁸² See Bruce King, *V.S. Naipaul*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003 [1993]), p. 137.

reich an Mühsal und Zermürbung wie an Belohnung und Beglückung.
(*Quellen*, p. 7)⁸³

Writing about the hajj has a long tradition: *rihla*, travel for learning and other purposes, emphasizes the interrelation between travelling and writing. It is a means of retrospective reflection which enables the writer to re-live the experience of the pilgrimage. It becomes a journey of the mind. Throughout his travel account, Trojanow clearly sees himself in the tradition of both the hajj (the pilgrimage as a form of travelling) and its accounts, *rihla* (the writing practice of/after the pilgrimage), which defines himself as a Muslim. This notion of self-definition is significant, particularly in relation to modern ideas of states and nations, and the experience of migration that challenge such (occasionally artificially created) categories. Nowadays, migration – the crossing of and conscious dealing with national, linguistic, and cultural borders – seems to be part of the ‘human condition’. Trojanow combines his experiences of migration with both the idea of ‘going home’ to one’s origins, to a universal ‘Muslim home’, and the hajj account as a form of self-exploration and thus autobiography, therefore providing the framework for his journey.⁸⁴ During this process, Trojanow’s need to define one particular ‘origin’ loses importance. He establishes a ‘community’ with both the culturally diverse pilgrims he encounters and other hajj writers. He seems to personify a challenging relationship between Islam and the West, and has a multidimensional perspective on his Muslim surroundings.

Both Trojanow and Naipaul travel towards a centre:⁸⁵ Trojanow to the original places of his religion in order to experience his individual spirituality as well as the strong force of the *umma*, Naipaul to the places where the answers to his questions regarding religious revivalism could lie. Both writers are searching for some form of knowledge which might be provided by the visiting of places and the encounter with people, yet also by the physical movement which gives time for

⁸³ ‘[Not translated: This report is part of an ancient tradition.] Ancient both as a form as well as a tradition, literary travel writing about the Hajj – *Rihla* in Arabic, *Safarnameh* in Persian – has been in existence for over one thousand years. These are the accounts of the Muslim pilgrimage as the culmination of all desires, the unique time-out that is rich in trial and tribulation as it is in rewards and delights.’ (*Mumbai*, p. 1).

⁸⁴ Barbara D. Metcalf, ‘The Pilgrimage Remembered: South Asian Accounts of the hajj’, in *Muslim Travellers* (see Eickelman and Piscatori, above), pp. 85-107 (pp. 100-01 and p. 88).

⁸⁵ Eickelman and Piscatori, ‘Social Theory in the Study of Muslim Societies’, pp. 3-25 (p. 12).

reflection and contemplation. In turn, the act of writing provides knowledge,⁸⁶ a renewed experience of the journey. Trojanow comments on his revived experience of the hajj as follows: 'Als Ramadan erneut begann [...], las ich meine Notizen durch und war fast überwältigt von der intensiven Vergegenwärtigung. Ich sehnte mich nach der Hadsch zurück, und ich wußte von einem Weg, wie ich die Reise noch einmal begehen konnte. Das war die stärkste Motivation, dieses Buch zu schreiben' (*Quellen*, pp. 165-66).⁸⁷ Trojanow experiences his pilgrimage again on paper, which appears as the 'real' pilgrimage, the pilgrimage of the mind. He thereby, like Naipaul, fulfils the expectations of the profession of the writer, despite the different natures of their journeys and their seemingly disparate intentions regarding the textualization of their journeys: the production of a book as a result of travel.

Both Trojanow and Naipaul are itinerant writers in the true sense of the words: they explore their peripatetic life in literature. However, Naipaul takes up an unusual position: having been a colonized subject himself and then having migrated from the 'margins' of Empire (Trinidad) to its 'centre' (London and Oxford), he now exercises power over the people he meets on his journeys. His power is closely connected to knowledge which he gained through his experiences of travel and migration as well as his Western education. This observation raises questions about travelling and power.⁸⁸ It therefore also needs to be asked if or how travel writing and postcolonialism, which here is a manifold and hybrid approach to perceiving the Other (the writer's openness to let other voices be heard), can harmonize. Does the choice of genre rule out any form of 'objective', non-patronizing writing? Since travel writing is usually regarded as a Western form of writing, the search for (postcolonial) alternatives might begin by examining travel writers of a post-colonial or migrant background and, based on their multiple cultural experiences, a possibly, but, as we have seen with Naipaul, not necessarily more differentiated view on their surroundings.

⁸⁶ See V.S. Naipaul, 'Two Worlds (The Nobel Lecture, 07 December 2001)', in *Literary Occasions* (see Naipaul, above), pp. 181-95 (p. 189).

⁸⁷ 'When Ramadan began again [...] I re-read my notes and was almost overwhelmed by how intensely I could still visualise it. I longed to be back on the Hajj, and I knew I could embark on that journey once more by writing about it: This was the most powerful motivation for this book' (*Mumbai*, pp. 203-04).

⁸⁸ Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 1.

In contrast to migrants, travel writers have the possibility of return.⁸⁹ This presupposition enables them to nurture an awareness of difference, since they do not vitally need to integrate into a new society, but are looking for modes of identification. Travel writers are often looking for a basis of identification with their 'subjects' in order to be able to give an inside view; however, they also need to keep a certain distance in order to ensure 'objectivity', which results in what Bhabha uncovers as 'unequal relations of power'.⁹⁰ One could argue that this mutuality yet simultaneous contradiction is inherent in travel writing.

This postcolonial consideration of travel writing raises questions about techniques of representation and interpretation, and about the acknowledgement that every traveller is influenced by his/her culture(s), religion, history, and other aspects of his/her background.⁹¹ In 1979, shortly after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Naipaul goes on a 'pilgrimage' in order to look into and find reasons for what he regards as the destructive force of Islam. He also visits places of Muslim worship and pilgrimage, and thereby defines himself primarily as an individual who travels in opposition to the believers, a group of people Naipaul does not seem to feel a connection with. His default of knowing Muslims goes back to his early childhood in the Indian (Hindu) diaspora in Trinidad: 'We knew nothing of Muslims. This idea of strangeness, of the thing to be kept outside, extended even to other Hindus.'⁹² Naipaul grew up with a strong sense of difference; nonetheless, when he started travelling, he seems to have been looking for similarities between him and other migrants regardless of their religious and cultural backgrounds: 'I thought, when I began to travel in the Muslim world, that I would be travelling among people who would be like the people of my own community.'⁹³ Naipaul's comment could be read as his awareness of a similar colonial background for Hindu and Muslim migrants (after all, many Indians are Muslims). However, this kind of identification based on his former Trinidadian community as well as a common experience of migration

⁸⁹ Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters*, p. 5.

⁹⁰ Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, p. 11. Huggan refers to Bhabha here ('Postcolonial Criticism', in *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1992), pp. 437-65).

⁹¹ See Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities', in *Black Film, British Cinema*, ed. by Kobena Mercer, BFI/ICA Documents, 7 (London: Institute for Contemporary Arts, 1988), pp. 27-31 (p. 29; original emphasis).

⁹² Naipaul, 'Two Worlds', pp. 181-95 (p. 188).

⁹³ Naipaul, 'Our Universal Civilization', pp. 503-17 (p. 508).

with Muslims is a limited one only. Instead, Naipaul opens up a number of dichotomies – between East and West, Muslims and Hindus – which seem to influence his writing about non-Arab Muslim countries.

Trojanow's diverse background equally affects his travel experience: he is of Bulgarian origin, but has lived in Germany, Kenya, India, and, at the time of the writing of this thesis, South Africa. However, he becomes less aware of cultural difference as he travels among and with Muslims who share the same goal: the pilgrimage as spiritual experience and celebration of the *umma*. It determines his interaction with fellow pilgrims. As they are united in their belief on the hajj, there is no space for divisions. Trojanow's travel aims are more emotional and less intellectual than Naipaul's as he is less questioning regarding his Muslim surroundings: he wants to find out less and simply experience what it means to be with fellow believers on the hajj. Naipaul's inquiry, in contrast, is influenced by his curious approach to his subjects, an approach which is determined by his wish to get to the bottom of the 'secret' of the Muslim rage.

Both Naipaul and Trojanow – regardless of whether they keep a conscious distance as travellers or not – also travel as writers, which results in the 'phenomenon of *distance*' from the people they meet on their journeys.⁹⁴ This often makes travel writing a literary genre of (inter-)personal distance and detachment, a genre which focuses on the traveller as writer himself. This holds particularly true for Naipaul: he keeps a deliberate distance from his 'subjects' who provide the writing material for him and to his audience who might be influenced by his views. Trojanow, however, engages with his fellow-travellers (they appear as one group) as well as with his audience who are likely to have an intellectual interest in Islam. Trojanow can, therefore, fulfil his aspiration to contribute to a more differentiated view on Islam – with a book that he, paradoxically, claims not to have had in mind when travelling to Mecca and Medina.⁹⁵ The writers' 'self-production' (as aloof (Naipaul) and engaged (Trojanow) traveller and writer) also come to the fore when considering the two focal points (although with different connotations) that seem to determine Trojanow's and Naipaul's texts; they will guide my further discussion: firstly, an exploration of

⁹⁴ Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, p. 186; original emphasis.

⁹⁵ See Appendix I, 'An Interview with Ilija Trojanow', pp. 267 and 273-74..

Islam's past, and secondly, the interaction between the individual and the community of the believers.

2.2 The Originality and Diversity of Islam

2.2.1 Tracing Islam's Origin

Islam is often associated with a strong sense of tradition and a focus on the past and the Prophet Muhammad. Although it is the youngest of the three 'religions of the book' whose self-consciousness arose out of the *hijra* and is reflected in the hajj as a Muslim's conscious reflection on his/her religious roots, Western Christians often perceive it as a religion that looks back to its origins as a means of justifying or explaining the present. Both Naipaul and Trojanow address originality and diversity in Islam. Trojanow travels to Islam's roots in order to celebrate the Muslim community's unity, whereas Naipaul employs Islam's past – or rather the believers' urge to refer back to it – as a means of understanding its present state, and as the basis for his criticism.

Naipaul travels in order to find out how 'fundamentalism' could grow into such a significant issue in the non-Arab Muslim world. He sees one answer to his query in the conversion from culturally different, non-Islamic cultures to a religion whose new believers do not share the same associations with original Muslims. Naipaul undertakes 'excursions among the converted peoples', whose form of Islam he identifies as a transformed one. Conversion implies an idea of originality or common origin on which Islam is built, yet also a sense of leaving non-Islamic traditions and customs behind. In his prologue to *Beyond Belief* he states:

Islam is in its origin an Arab religion. Everyone not an Arab who is a Muslim is a convert. Islam is not simply a matter of conscience or private belief. It makes imperial demands. A convert's world view alters. His holy places are in Arab lands; his sacred language is Arabic. His idea of history alters. He rejects his own; he becomes, whether he likes it or not, a part of the Arab story. The convert has to turn away from everything that is his. The disturbance for societies is immense, and even after a thousand years can

remain unresolved; the turning away has to be done again and again. People develop fantasies about who and what they are; and in the Islam of converted countries there is an element of neurosis and nihilism. These countries can be easily set on the boil. (*Beyond*, p. 1)

The connection between 'fundamentalism' and conversion is, according to Naipaul's observations, based on the convert's (the non-Arab Muslim's) alleged loss of his/her past and the adoption of an alien past. For him, the converts' original ties to their culturally different past were severed with their ancestors' conversion to Islam; yet simultaneously it is not possible for them to embrace the 'new' religion completely as they are not familiar with its roots in the same way as an original (Arab) Muslim would be. Religion is, therefore, closely connected to an idea of origin and identity as well as the convert's neurosis to be a 'proper' Muslim and his/her nihilism towards his/her previous past.

Trojanow, in contrast, constructs Islam as a diverse religion. Its believers are united by a common origin which they celebrate in its 'homeland', Mecca. Thus, he has a different approach to the Islamic past. As a Muslim, many of the rituals he practises are based on an awareness of Islam's origin, particularly when going on the hajj. He also establishes a strong link between this past, particularly the place of Islam's origin, Mecca, and how it is expressed in the pilgrims' individual cultures. This, in turn, is connected with the believers who celebrate belonging to the Muslim community by worshipping in Mecca. How are these diverse approaches expressed?

2.2.1.1 Islam as Origin and Islam's Past

For Naipaul, the notion of conversion is closely connected to a 'Muslim idea' of the past. According to his interpretation, the forms of Islam he encounters on his journeys are mediated forms of Islam: Islams without a past, or rather with a reconstructed past connected to Arabia. As Naipaul does not credit the changing nature of any religion, he describes how Islam itself has 'converted' in the countries he visits: from a 'pure' form of religion to a form of politics (primarily to 'fundamentalism'). Naipaul seems to employ double standards: his form of (secular) Hinduism as he experienced it in the Indian diaspora of Trinidad was certainly as 'impure' as the Islams he encounters in non-Arab countries. Other cultural influences

from the Caribbean, Africa, etc. will have shaped 'his' Hinduism.⁹⁶ Although Naipaul is not a convert and his family is from Hinduism's 'original land', India, his Hinduism is, just as the forms of Islam he encounters, detached from the 'original land' of South Asia. One could even extend this idea and regard the different forms of Hinduism as they exist in the countries he travels in as 'mediated' forms of Hinduism. Naipaul bemoans the loss of 'his' religion due to the contemporary dominance of Islam, and he does not establish an 'original' form of Hinduism as he does with Islam.

Naipaul argues that in non-Arab Muslim countries 'the faith abolished the past. And when the past was abolished like this, more than an idea of history suffered. Human behavior, and ideals of good behavior could suffer.'⁹⁷ These countries wanted to become 'pure(ly) Muslim' by cutting their ties with their own past completely, which is also partly Naipaul's own past, the Hindu past of his ancestors. (He particularly experiences this form of identification in Indonesia (*Among*, p. 435).) The revival of Islam and its 'fundamentalist' form of expression in particular serve as a counterpoint to Naipaul's perception of an 'original' past, including its 'human side', which was often forcefully removed through the act of conversion. He describes in great detail how Muslims 'invent' history and an Arab ancestry in order to overcome this loss of cultural 'originality' and to feel 'purely', 'authentically' Muslim.⁹⁸ 'I was among people whose identity was more or less contained in the faith. I was among people who wished to be pure.'⁹⁹ This (religious) history is closely tied to the political development and history of the countries he visits: here, Islam – maybe more so than in 'originally' Muslim countries – tends to be not only a religion but a complete way of life.

So I not only began to understand what people in Pakistan meant when they told me that Islam was a complete way of life, affecting everything; I began to understand that – though it might be said that we had shared a common sub-continental origin – I had travelled a different way. I began to formulate

⁹⁶ For further details on Hinduism in the Caribbean, see Stephen Vertovec, *The Hindu Diaspora: Comparative Patterns*, Global Diasporas (London: Routledge, 2000), and *Hindu Trinidad: Religion, Ethnicity and Socio-economic Change*, Warwick University Caribbean Studies (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1992).

⁹⁷ Naipaul, 'Our Universal Civilization', pp. 503-17 (p. 509).

⁹⁸ For a discussion of notions of authenticity, see Gupta, *V.S. Naipaul*, p. 72.

⁹⁹ Naipaul, 'Our Universal Civilization', pp. 503-17 (p. 512).

the idea of the universal civilization – which, growing up in Trinidad, I had lived or been part of without quite knowing that I did so.¹⁰⁰

Naipaul starts his argument by establishing similarities between himself and South Asian Muslims (a common sub-continental origin). He continues by finding a connection to his personal experiences which are primarily based on migrations – literally to Britain, yet also metaphorically on to a different intellectual, (religiously) more independent level – and perceives the forms of Islam he encounters on his journeys in relation to himself as a representative of the secular West. His development as a person as well as a writer has resulted in his idea of the ‘universal civilization’, of which Islam can only be part if it refrains from being hostile to the (secular) West. Islam, as he sees it, did not develop towards a ‘universal civilization’, and, in his opinion, this means stagnation: Islam does not seem to progress, something which is revealed particularly by its ‘medieval’ nature. A modern Islamic state is, therefore, not possible and is bound to fail.¹⁰¹ Naipaul seems to create a Western identity based on the idea of modernity and, therefore, perceives ‘Islam [as a] religion with a glorious past but an impoverished present.’¹⁰² One could argue, however, that Naipaul tries to compensate for his own lack of past to some extent. Having a past is part of being a ‘metropolitan writer’.¹⁰³ As a former colonial, he bemoans his lack of tradition,¹⁰⁴ and, as a result, seems to have created ‘a myth of origin’.¹⁰⁵ Naipaul’s background and his own sense of (non-)belonging need to be considered in this context. Having been brought up in the Indian diaspora of Trinidad, his own sense of non-belonging contributes to his understanding of notions of origin. Naipaul often refers to his – a migrant’s – sense of loss of his old tradition as well as a sense of not being part of a new tradition after having moved to Britain. Furthermore, for him, Islam cannot be a religion that one chooses, as it has strong roots in its geographical land. (I will refer to the interrelation between religion and places when discussing Trojanow in Mecca.) However, according to Naipaul, the Muslim conquests, which often forced Islamic conversion onto people, result in total

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 511-12.

¹⁰¹ Gupta, *V.S. Naipaul*, p. 72 and p. 78.

¹⁰² Weiss, *On the Margins*, p. 148.

¹⁰³ Naipaul, ‘Reading and Writing’, pp. 3-31 (p. 20).

¹⁰⁴ V.S. Naipaul, ‘Jasmine’ (1964), in *Literary Occasions* (see Naipaul, above), pp. 45-52 (p. 48).

¹⁰⁵ Levy, *V.S. Naipaul*, p. xi.

absorption and overly rigorous application resulting in a complete way of life, which can easily lead to 'fundamentalism'.

Naipaul constructs the West as the driving force behind positive change. His position in the West needs to be considered once again: he himself 'converted' from his colonial background to Western ideas of individualism, which has served as a 'conquering force' in a similar way as Islam with its 'all-embracing' nature does now. Naipaul's examination of the notion of conversion (in relation to the past) could, therefore, be read as a self-recognition in the face of the Other (which is part of his former self and which, in retrospect, he rejects) – a notion, as I discussed in my introduction to this chapter, which is common in travel texts. This self-re-discovery (which Trojanow, by contrast, practices through identification with his fellow believers and not differentiation from them) comes especially to the fore when Naipaul examines the Muslim countries' relationship with the West. He increasingly establishes his position as the privileged and more knowledgeable traveller from the West, whilst paradoxically the concept of 'the West' appears ambiguous in the context of his own colonial heritage: his origin is not as clear-cut as he seems to pretend, and the West is as 'inauthentic' as the Islam he encounters.¹⁰⁶ As Rana Kabbani points out, 'Naipaul feels within his rights to offer whatever descriptions suits his prejudice – for after all, he is "involved" with this East, having emerged from it and having "made good".'¹⁰⁷ Naipaul's heritage – and I specifically include his experience as a migrant to Britain here – serves as a means to establish his superiority. He describes his and the West's difficult and complicated relationship with a number of non-Western countries and also describes how the West is needed especially for science and modern technology. Naipaul thus reveals notions of mimicry, of imitating the West in order to extract everything that is needed on the way of a complete Muslim way of life. Therefore, as much as the Muslim countries (as an example of formerly colonized people, the Other) need the West, so does the West need the Other, Naipaul being a representative of both, the (former) Other and the West. In the countries he visits, Naipaul sees what Rob Nixon lists as follows:

¹⁰⁶ See Melman, 'The Middle East/Arabia', pp. 105-21 (p. 116): 'The word "authentic" has different meanings: historical (denoting the descendants of the inhabitants of the peninsula before Islamisation), biological and even racial (indicating Arab racial purity), or socio-cultural (defining a nomadic and pastoral life and economy)'.

¹⁰⁷ Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 130.

‘insecurity from a weak sense of history, the shock of modernization, dependency from the colonial era, and followed exploitation’.¹⁰⁸ As a result of this disappointment in ‘Western modernization’ and as a form of counter-reaction to European Imperialism, many formerly colonized countries started to regard ‘Islamic solidarity’ ‘as the correct alternative’.¹⁰⁹

For instance, in Pakistan, Naipaul observes: ‘Step by step, out of its Islamic striving, Pakistan had undone the rule of law it had inherited from the British, and replaced it with nothing’ (*Among*, p. 195). Naipaul criticizes the colonizing effect of Islam and seems to suggest that, in comparison, British Imperialism was better than ‘Islamic Imperialism’: the positive effects of British Imperialism (such as institutions) were deliberately eradicated to set the stage for an own, Islamic way, yet, for Naipaul, functioning alternatives were not offered. Naipaul has critically dealt with the consequences that British Imperialism had on him as an individual and a writer in previous texts, for example, *The Enigma of Arrival*. Having experienced British Imperialism and the, for him, positive effects himself, he feels justified to judge the ‘mess’ left behind in Pakistan when British institutions were ruled out. Overall, Naipaul seems to want to communicate that the non-Arab Muslim countries’ reconstruction of the ‘originality’ of their faith as a counter-reaction to British Imperialism is not the right alternative. It leads to ‘fundamentalism’ and ultimate destruction. The attachment to the Islamic past can, however, be interpreted in a different, more positive way, as Trojanow demonstrates.

2.2.1.2 The Experience of Mecca

For any Muslim, but particularly for a pilgrim who is going to Mecca, the past (the origin of his/her religion) is primarily symbolized by one place: the Ka’ba, which is the physical centre for every Muslim believer. As a place of worship which goes as far back as Abraham, it carries a great sense of history. The past is also experienced as physical time: the Muslim calendar starts with Muhammad’s *hijra* from Mecca to Medina in 622. Trojanow’s travel account is structured according to the days of the Muslim month of pilgrimage, *Zuul Hijjah*, which require particular rituals. These

¹⁰⁸ Nixon, *V.S. Naipaul*, p. 130.

¹⁰⁹ John Alden Williams, ed., *The Word of Islam* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), p. 215.

rituals refer back to Islam's past and its ancient land, and remind the pilgrim of significant incidents in the religion's development.¹¹⁰ They are followed by all Muslims all over the world (with individual, often culturally determined variations) and have the same implications. As well as being the focal point for Muslim belief, Mecca provides each pilgrim with a unique spiritual experience in the sphere of its history.

As all Muslims pray towards the Ka'ba, they create a strong sense of unity among themselves. However, the actual act of praying is an individual one. Despite this, praying simultaneously creates a collective experience, particularly on the hajj and in Mecca, when pilgrims are closest to the Ka'ba: 'Das Gebet, eine Struktur aus geraden und ungeraden Zahlen [...], vervollständigt die angelegte Symmetrie. In keiner anderen Religion ist dem Gebet ein so fester Rahmen vorgegeben, für den einzelnen wie für die Gemeinschaft' (*Quellen*, p. 55).¹¹¹ Symmetry has a positive connotation and is far removed from Naipaul's perception of Islam as a conformist religion that does not allow individuality among its believers. Trojanow returns to the idea of symmetry when describing Islamic architecture, which frames the spaces of Muslim worship. It enhances Trojanow's awareness of the beauty of Islam, and is part of his feeling of being a Muslim, which is arguably increased in and by the mosque. Art as something divine, and particularly in Mecca, as a means of connecting to the past, stands in a direct relationship to those who create and worship it, yet also worship in and with it.¹¹² This interaction refers back to Islam's past. He explains:

Die Gänge, die Bögen, die Kuppeln, die Galerien [der Masjid al-Haram, der Großen Moschee zu Mekka], sie sind imposant, aber ohne die Kaaba, eindrucksvoll ob ihrer Einfachheit, wären sie wirkungslos. Die goldene Stickerei auf dem schwarzen Stoff erscheint einem fast ein Zuviel an Ornament, eine Ablenkung von der reinen, kubisch gefaßten Idee. Das Symbol wird fortwährend bestätigt durch die Pilger, die zu jeder Tages- und

¹¹⁰ As I focus on the experience of Mecca as a place of the past with significance for every Muslim's present, it would go beyond the scope of this chapter to describe and explain all the rituals to be performed on the hajj.

¹¹¹ 'The prayer, a structure of even and odd numbers [...]: the created symmetry is rendered complete. In no other religion is prayer given such a structured framework, for the individual and for the community' (*Mumbai*, p. 62).

¹¹² For further details on the aesthetic experience of Islam, see Oliver Leaman, *Islamic Aesthetics: An Introduction*, The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

Nachzeit wie Planeten diese Sonne umkreisen (oder wie Elektronen den Atomkern) und mit jedem ihrer Schritte das rechteckige Objekt menschlich aufladen. Aus dieser Wechselwirkung entsteht erst das Bayt Allah, das Haus Gottes, und die Umma, die Gemeinschaft der Gläubigen. Es ist wie mit dem heiligen Text: Er benötigt die Hingabe, die Moralität des Lesers, um lebendig zu werden. Die Offenbarung ist in ein menschliches Gefäß gegossen, die Sprache, und somit anhängig von der Kraft und der Wirkung, die ein jeder aus ihr schöpfen und ihr verleihen kann. (*Quellen*, pp. 41-42)¹¹³

The pilgrims are united by their religion's past which is centred in Mecca and also expressed by the architecture of the Haram al-Sharif. Their past is a living past, a past revived through themselves by continuing to relate back to it in their consciousness (through the act of praying towards Mecca, for instance) as well as by the actual journey to the original sites of Islam. Thus, for Trojanow, the believers form a unity, not uniformity, as Naipaul would perceive it. This unity, the *umma*, is an historic concept which reaches into the present and beyond: it was formed by movement (the *hijra*), a journey which led to the self-recognition of the believers as a community. By going to Islam's original sites, to its 'physical past', the unity 'among the believers' is strengthened and consciously celebrated, which I explore in the following.

2.2.2 The Writers' Relationships with Western Individuality and the *Umma*

The different interpretations and definitions of Islam also come to the fore when taking a closer look at the believers – as individuals and as community. For Naipaul, Islam seems almost incomprehensible, and he reduces the religion to the concept of 'submission' (the Arabic word *islām* means 'submission' or 'self-surrender to God'),

¹¹³ 'The passageways, the arches, the domes, and the galleries are indeed imposing, but without the Kaaba, impressive despite the simplicity of its architecture, they could be without effect. The golden embroidery on the black material seems almost too ornamental, a distraction from the purity of the simple, cubically conceived idea. The symbol is constantly affirmed by the pilgrims who night and day circle this sun like planets, each of their steps charging the right-angled structure with human power. It is through this interaction that *Bayt Allah*, the House of God, and the Ummah, the community of believers, emerges. It is like the holy texts: it requires the devotion and the morality of the reader to come to life. The revelation is poured into a human vessel, language, and is thus dependant on the power and the effect each one creates from it and lends it.' (*Mumbai*, p. 44).

which, for him, means its literal translation and a lack of individuality, whereas Trojanow unquestioningly celebrates the unifying force of the *umma* when going on the hajj.

What meaning does the community of the believers have for Trojanow and Naipaul? I shall analyse the supposed dichotomy between individualism and the idea of the *umma* as a form of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. Naipaul seems to reject the idea of the *umma*. He comments on the internationality of Islam – here in Pakistan – rather cynically:

It was organized; every row had a number. I was passed from person to person, snatched at one stage from a developing conversation, and taken to the foreign enclave, where there were Arabs, Indonesians, and even Africans (clearly old hands at these international Muslim gatherings, unashamedly enjoying the ethnic sensation they and their costumes and their language were exciting). (*Among*, p. 245)

Naipaul gives a sense of dichotomy between his idea of Western individualism and the possibility of preserving individuality within a larger community. He seems to perceive the Muslim version of community (and the symmetry as described by Trojanow) as 'facelessness [which] had begun to seem like an Islamic motif. [...] Individualism was to be surrendered to the saviour and avenger. But when the revolution was over, individualism – in the great city the Shah had built – was to be cherished again' (*Among*, p. 28). Although coming from a Hindu background with a strong sense of community, Naipaul seems to champion a notion of individuality which focuses on the separate individual and which does not allow space for other forms of experiencing individuality.

One interesting aspect and point of comparison is the nomadism that both writers have experienced in their lifetimes. This experience serves as a metaphorical contact zone which is based on Naipaul's former experiences which he uses as a justification for his judgement of people: 'a peasant or nomadic longing stirred within me. [...] But what to me was the impulse of the moment was for them a way of life. I would move on, do other things; they would continue as I saw them' (*Among*, p. 217). The word 'nomadic' connotes 'peasant', which, for Naipaul, equals backwardness, just as Islam seems to represent a backward religion for Naipaul.

However, despite the fact that Naipaul frequently acts as a traveller 'with imperial associations', as a 'former nomad' he can be regarded as a postcolonial writer with a migrant experience (he moved from the 'margin' of Empire to the metropolis London).¹¹⁴ Yet he does not seem to be able to share the experience of dislocation and marginality with the Muslims he meets on his journeys. He now comes as a privileged traveller, someone with a 'home' to return to, who, nonetheless, often uses his previous experience of migration as a starting point for the conversations he has with people. Their travelling (from country to city, to other, mainly Western, countries for education, and, historically, from polytheism and a diverse understanding of religion to monotheism and organized religion) has significant effects on the development of Islam – a notion which is frequently referred to by both Naipaul and Trojanow. As James Clifford points out: 'if contemporary migrant populations are not to disappear as mute, passive straws in the political-economic winds, we need to listen to a wide range of "travel stories" (not "travel literature" in the bourgeois sense).'¹¹⁵ Naipaul usually perceives these 'travel stories' (the life-stories of his conversation partners) with a critical eye. These migrations remind him of his own migration from Trinidad to England as an anxious young man. However, through education, he could overcome this anxiety and develop into the self-assured writer who is now travelling the non-Arab Muslim world. Naipaul creates the aloof position of the outsider, as the following example demonstrates: 'Masood's panic now, his vision of his world as a blind alley (with his knowledge that there was activity and growth elsewhere), took me back to my own panic of thirty or thirty-five years before' (*Among*, pp. 224-25). Naipaul gains power through his identification with Masood, which is based on his former self; yet, as he has moved on, he gained Western knowledge and experience which gives him power over his non-Western 'subject'. Knowledge becomes Naipaul's means of superiority. Fawzia Mustafa links his 'obsessive privileging of the Word and the Book and the "coherence" and "order" leading to "knowledge" they represent' to his Orientalist perception of the non-Western worlds.¹¹⁶ She, as many other critics, regards this as an expression of

¹¹⁴ Korte defines postcolonial travel writing as follows: 'as referring to travel writing produced after the Second World War by such travellers/writers whose origin is located in the world formerly colonised by Britain' (Korte, 'Exploring Without a Mission?', pp. 383-95 (p. 385)).

¹¹⁵ Clifford, *Routes*, p. 38.

¹¹⁶ Mustafa, *V.S. Naipaul*, p. 27.

Naipaul's position as a *Mimic Man*, particularly in terms of knowledge. With this in mind, one could make out these tendencies in Naipaul's writing; however, Naipaul is all too often criticized for 'having made it' in the West and for not keeping his peripheral position. It seems that for Naipaul Western knowledge is progress; yet it is also a vehicle for reaching towards open-mindedness from a politically peripheral point of view and beyond cultural boundaries, both geographically and intellectually.

Trojanow's approach to nomadism is based on his own experiences of migration and the question of one's origin. Throughout his travel account, Trojanow celebrates the unifying force of Islam, the religion that all pilgrims – no matter from where they are and how they 'wear' their individual form of Islam – have in common. However, this celebration of the Muslim community, the *umma*, does not deny the significance of the individual experience, despite the vastness of pilgrims. Trojanow is a special case: born of Bulgarian parents, having grown up in Bulgaria, Germany, and Kenya, he has lived in a number of countries, the last one being India at the time of his pilgrimage. This peripatetic lifestyle triggers the question of origin, which serves as a leitmotif throughout his journey, only to refer back to Islam, not a state or a nation, as the place of origin. This is expressed in various answers to the question where he is from, and in the different answers he gives according to his conversation partners: he never replies definitely, but leaves deliberate gaps:

Bruder Ilias, warte! Ich habe von dir gehört. Ich wollte Dich unbedingt kennenlernen. Endlich jemand von meinem Kontinent!

Ein knochiger Mann meines Alters stand vor mir und stellte sich auf englisch als Arif vor.

Welcher Kontinent mag das wohl sein? fragte ich.

Er war verunsichert. Stammst du nicht aus Deutschland?

Doch, sagte ich, ein wenig.

Na, also, ich meinte Europa, ich bin aus England. Dort geboren und aufgewachsen.

[...]

Arif träumte davon, nach Indien heimzukehren (er sagte 'heimkehren', obwohl er in England geboren war), sobald seine Kinder erwachsen seien, auf eigenen Beinen stünden. Aber er hatte keine Antwort auf die Frage, ob das reine islamische Leben sich in Gujarat, woher seine Familie stammte, um so viel leichter verwirklichen ließe. (*Quellen*, pp. 89-91)¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ "“Brother Ilias, wait!” someone called. “I have heard about you. I really wanted to meet you. Someone from my my own continent at last!”

A bony man about my age stood in front of me and introduced himself, in English, as Arif.

Later on Trojanow tells us: 'Ich erklärte ihnen, daß ich aus Indien stamme und daher keine Ahnung hätte von Fußball, aber wenn sie sich über Kricket unterhalten wollten ...' (*Quellen*, p. 151).¹¹⁸ He makes clear that the question of origin is a secondary issue for him: in the first quotation, it seems to be the continent of Europe that connects these two Muslims who have completely different backgrounds; in the second quotation, Trojanow perceives himself as an Indian, probably on the basis of his current place of abode. His and other people's perceptions of origin constantly change according to people's backgrounds, cultures, etc. However, this instability does not create a longing in Trojanow for a place of origin, a 'home' as it does for Arif. Trojanow does not share this aspiration, and it needs to be asked whether he has the same notion of origin as many of his fellow pilgrims. Numerous questions remain: what function do nationalities have? Where is one from? What role do these kind of classifications play in today's globalized world? Is there a need for differentiation and individuality (which Naipaul does not seem to see 'among the believers')? On the hajj, the community of believers should stand above the idea of nationhood (which is a political entity), but individuality within the faith is expressed through nationality, which in itself is based on cultural differences (as symbolized by the different sections in the tent area in Mina, how to wear the *ihram*, and the different national dresses).¹¹⁹

What are the results of Trojanow's and Naipaul's approaches? Trojanow comes closer to the Muslim community, which is reinforced by the actual movement of the pilgrimage. He also moves mentally, towards and simultaneously with the people – fellow believers – he talks to. He experiences a 'heightened identification

"And which continent might that be?" I asked.

He looked uncertain. "You're from Germany, aren't you?"

"Yes," I said, "sort of."

"Well, then, Europe, I meant. I'm from England, born and grew up there."

[...]

Arif dreamed of returning home to India (he said "returning home" even though he'd been born in England), as soon as his children had grown up, and could stand on their own two feet. But he had no answer to my question of whether it was easier to lead a pure Islamic life in Gujarat where his family was from.' (*Mumbai*, pp. 109-11).

¹¹⁸ 'I explained that I came from India and didn't have a clue about football but if they wanted to discuss cricket' (*Mumbai*, p. 188).

¹¹⁹ See *Quellen*, pp. 24-25 and pp. 75-76 / *Mumbai*, pp. 25-26 and pp. 90-91.

with Islam and fellow Muslims',¹²⁰ but Trojanow makes us aware of the heterogeneity of Islam. Naipaul travels through diverse countries and perceives a number of versions of Islam, but his perceptions are shaped by the (rather one-dimensional) idea of Islam as a backward-looking and self-contained religion. He does not travel in the way Trojanow travels forward but remains at his pre-conditioned, primarily Western point of view.

Trojanow aims for a transnational or transcultural dimension in Islam. Unlike Naipaul, he does not see a clear-cut differentiation between Muslims with an Arab background, as 'original', and Muslims from 'colonized', that is, 'converted', countries. This differentiation relates back to the Arab expansion and subsequent incorporation of other cultural influences into Islam. Gerhard Endress explains that 'the Islamic countries having no common political focus drew further and further apart from each other; instead of the cultural community of classical Islam, "national" cultures arose with different linguistic, literary and artistic forms of expression.'¹²¹ Trojanow's religion is a lived one through the experience of the *umma*, the community of believers: that does not mean that a Muslim gives up his/her individuality, but rather that his/her sense of being Muslim is strengthened by the experience of the Other who shares the same religious background whilst keeping a personal faith. In this context, Trojanow refers to the direct experience of Mecca, symbolized by the Masjid al-Haram and shared by all Muslims, as the creator of unity. By physically going to this significant place of worship, the diverse Muslim groups meet on common ground. For him, the interaction between the place and the people who worship in this place is crucial. Trojanow clearly describes what Eickelman and Piscatori refer to as 'a direct causal relationship between the act of travel and a heightened sense of being Muslim'.¹²² Trojanow develops a stronger feeling of community by going on this pilgrimage – with Muslims and with other hajj writers (even reaching beyond religious boundaries): 'Ich spürte eine Brüderschaft [...] mit den Muslims, die Zeugnis abgelegt, und mit den Christen, die Bericht erstattet hatten' (*Quellen*, p. 159).¹²³ His travel account reaches beyond an

¹²⁰ Eickelman and Piscatori, 'Preface', in *Muslim Travellers*, pp. xii-xxii (p. xii).

¹²¹ Endress, *Islam: An Historical Introduction*, p. 94.

¹²² Eickelman and Piscatori 'Social Theory in the Study of Muslim Societies', pp. 3-25 (p. 16).

¹²³ 'I felt a brotherhood [...] both with the Muslims who had testified as with the Christians who had reported on it' (*Mumbai*, p. 199).

Orientalist experience of the East. He recognizes the Other as part of himself: religion, for him, serves as a way of connecting to people, whereas Naipaul sees it as a force of separation. The question of individuality and community is, therefore, not only differently perceived by Trojanow and Naipaul but also differently interpreted and 'used'. This derives partly from the fact that the former is a Muslim and the latter is not, and partly from their different objectives for their journeys – the spiritual experience and the celebration of the *umma*, on the one hand, and the search for explanations for the 'Muslim rage' as an extreme form of religiousness, on the other. The results are different versions of Islam.

2.3 The Experience of Different Islams

Going on a journey, and a pilgrimage in particular, implies a sense of literal as well as metaphorical movement. The traditional pilgrimage as a spiritual experience reinforces this twofold meaning of travelling as change and transformation. However, a journey that is a pilgrimage towards answers and knowledge can equally influence the traveller and writer.

Trojanow and Naipaul construct different versions of Islam on their journeys. Both writers perceive Islam primarily in relation to themselves – both as travellers and writers. Yet each writer puts a different emphasis on these roles. Being a Muslim, Trojanow travels foremost as a pilgrim, claiming to be the writer again only after the journey; he literally performs Islam (through rituals) in order to learn but also in order to stylize himself deliberately as a Muslim with a diverse background and an open-minded perception of cultures and religions. He thereby creates what Eickelman and Piscatori refer to in relation to Muslim travellers in general as an 'image of a flexible Islam'.¹²⁴ Iain Chambers suggests that, on migratory journeys, there is 'no fixed identity or final destination'.¹²⁵ This idea coincides with the reading of the hajj as a celebration of Muslim diversity in unity: in its accumulation, Islam appears as a culturally diverse religion. Translation (the transferral of knowledge

¹²⁴ Eickelman and Piscatori, 'Preface', in *Muslim Travellers*, pp. xii-xxii (p. xiv).

¹²⁵ Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, p. 25.

from more experienced Muslims to the learner Trojanow as well as the interaction of different forms of Islam in its 'homeland') becomes thereby a tool of education and understanding oneself as a Muslim. Although the pilgrims perform the same rituals that have been practised for centuries, they are able to keep and constantly change their individuality by primarily focusing on cultural, non-religious differences. However, the successful completion of the hajj does not imply a final destination either: it continues after the journey itself (in the mind), it is an ongoing process which is possibly expressed through a changed lifestyle and perceptions of Islam. Furthermore, Trojanow's experience of both his individual spirituality and the celebration of the *umma* seemed to have strengthened his sense of being part of a whole whilst discovering diversity in unity and symmetry.

Naipaul, in contrast, performs something completely different: the role of the inquiring writer. He perceives Islam as stupefied unity in diversity (the non-Arab countries he travels in). As he primarily wants to understand why and how 'fundamentalism' came into existence, he puts himself in the position of an exploring outsider (as opposed to Trojanow who, as a Muslim pilgrim on the hajj, is an insider). Naipaul regards (literal) translation as access to other languages and thus cultures. It serves, effectively, as the sole means of getting to the bottom of 'Muslim rage'. Naipaul wants to achieve rather than experience: his aim is to gain knowledge, and his journey becomes a pilgrimage to knowledge and understanding, rather than to Islam itself.

The role of the writer and the production of his text on Islam are significant, particularly when considering Naipaul's and Trojanow's writing styles. For Naipaul, the task of writing a stylistically sophisticated book seems to be as fundamental as the content of his travel accounts. He frequently reflects upon the act of writing and, in contrast to his earlier travel books, perceives himself as a 'manager of narrative', someone who claims to let 'the people of the country come to the front' (*Beyond*, p. 2) (as we have seen, this claim is not entirely fulfilled). As a high-profile and prestigious writer, Naipaul takes a stance of authority on his 'subjects', which is reminiscent of imperial claims on the Other. His highly sophisticated use of English can convince the Western readership of the relevance of the perceptions of Islam of

the former colonial who now contributes to Western traditions of literature such as travel writing.

Trojanow's engagement with his readers is of a different nature than Naipaul's. As a less high-profile writer, he does not have to fulfil his readers' expectations in terms of style (and content, for that matter). He aims to contribute to the tradition of hajj literature. Trojanow underlines this ambition, as well as his engagement with the culturally diverse *umma* in the places of Islam's origin (its past) in stylistic terms. For instance: 'Gemeinsam ist allen muslimischen Autoren, daß sie die eigenen Gefühle nicht in den Vordergrund stellen, daß sie nur selten aus dem Brunnen der eigenen Befindlichkeiten schöpfen' (*Quellen*, pp. 7-8).¹²⁶ (Trojanow begins the sentence with 'gemeinsam' ('common'), thus emphasizing the idea of community; he repeats 'daß' ('that') rather than connects the two sub-clauses with a conjunction, and he uses the archaic metaphor 'aus dem Brunnen der eigenen Befindlichkeiten schöpfen' ('to draw from the well of one's own sensitivities').) As shown in this example, he reflects his embrace of the *umma* and previous hajj writers with a partly archaic, partly straightforward, yet highly metaphoric style which, potentially, can reach more people and believers.

The writers communicate, therefore, different forms of Islam. Naipaul's conclusion is as follows: 'Islam meant "submission", and in an Islamic republic, such as the people of Iran had passionately wanted and had voted for in a referendum, everyone had to submit' (*Beyond*, p. 163). For Naipaul, conversion triggers a false sense of belonging.¹²⁷ As he rarely differentiates between different (Arab as well as non-Arab) forms of Islam, he creates an 'idea Islam',¹²⁸ which is primarily defined and fixed by its violence, 'fundamentalism', dependency on the West, backwardness, and the unquestionable acceptance of the faith. His texts do not give any hints of a changed, more positive, and open perception of Islam as a result of his journey.

In contrast, Trojanow seems to construct himself deliberately as an open traveller and thus in opposition to Naipaul. He is specifically looking for flexibility,

¹²⁶ 'A common feature for all Muslim narrators who write about their Hajj experience is that they do not place their own feelings in the foreground and only on occasion delve into their own sensitivities' (*Mumbai*, p. 2).

¹²⁷ See Weiss, *On the Margins*, p. 155.

¹²⁸ See Said, *Orientalism*, p. 5: 'the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West'.

also through the people he communicates with: 'Es mag paradox erscheinen, meinte der Ältere, aber manche Ideale des Islam sind im Westen eher verwirklicht' (*Quellen*, p. 153).¹²⁹ Trojanow rejects the idea of an Islam stuck in the past. His definition of Islam is based on ongoing transformation. Contrary to Naipaul's utilization of his migratory experiences, of his former self that enables him to connect with the Muslims he encounters, Trojanow seems to transfer his history of migration onto his idea of Islam as a flexible religion. In this sense, Islam stands for particular ideals that can be lived anywhere and are not tied to an 'original' place. They can also be re-lived through the act of writing; but whereas Naipaul admits his aim to produce a book, Trojanow solely claims to re-experience the feelings evoked by the journey, the hajj, through the mental journey of writing. Thus, both the literal, physical movement and the metaphorical movement of the mind back to the sites of the journey by reflecting upon them and the encounters there before and whilst writing contribute to a pilgrimage as a unique experience that does not end.

¹²⁹ "“It might sound paradoxical,” the older one said, “but some of the Islamic ideals are more of a reality in Britain [in original: the West]” (*Mumbai*, p. 190).

Chapters 1 and 2 have focused on movement and translation processes. The following two chapters will concentrate on the notion of 'having arrived' in transcultural writing. Although translation processes are also significant for the post-migrant generation, they are regarded differently: in the texts, translation becomes a process of defining one's position in an environment that is no longer new. It is not necessary as a means of making sense of the unknown, or of settling in, anymore; rather it contributes to the self-awareness of many post-migrants as being 'different', yet part of German and British culture. The post-migrant protagonists make use of the results of translations undertaken by the previous generation: the 'gaps' and 'impurities' which shape their identities and become the basis for the creation of something new. In these translation processes, gender is the site of struggle (as already partly explored in Chapter 1, 'Moving with Islam'). Two kinds of translation, the maintenance of difference as a means of self-definition in the case of male post-migrants and the significance of language in the case of female post-migrants, will guide my reading of transcultural literature in the following two chapters.

3 Islam, 'Difference', and Masculinity¹

Male Perspectives from the 'Margins of Society': Feridun Zaimoğlu's *Kanak Sprak* and Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album*

This chapter explores the portrayal of young male Muslims and the role of Islam as a signifier of their Muslim identity. I examine how they create new spaces for the development of their Muslim masculinity, their exclusivity and anti-mainstreamness, and their new interpretations of 'community'. Butler's theory of performativity plays a significant role. I analyse how religion and sexuality can become performative acts. These performances enable the textualized young Muslims to reclaim their bodies and voices.

3.1 Young Muslim Men: Trouble-Makers?

The image of Muslims in the media in 2007 is primarily of young and radical men. These Muslims are seen as trouble-makers and situated at the margins of a Western society that is looking for security and stability in a time of an increasing fear of

¹ An earlier version of sections of this chapter was published as "'Was deutsch ist, bestimmen wir": Definitions of (Turkish-)Germanness in Feridun Zaimoğlu's *Kanak Sprak* and *Koppstoff*", *Focus on German Studies*, 14 (2007), 19-35.

'terrorism' and 'Islamic fundamentalism'. However, these prescribed margins are both rejected and peculiarly embraced by those in the German and British Muslim communities. Young and, in their individual ways, radical Muslims are excluded by dominant society, yet they increasingly use this imposed exclusion as a means of self-identification and self-definition.

This chapter focuses on the portrayal of young male Muslims in texts from Germany, or rather 'Kanakistan, ein[em] unbekannten Landstrich am Rande der deutschen Gesellschaft', as Feridun Zaimoğlu puts it in his *Kanak Sprak: 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (1995),² and the British writer Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* (1995).³ Both books centre on young males who are also, if not necessarily primarily, defined by their Muslim identity. This enforces or reinforces their identity as 'different' and in opposition to the West in general, and particularly to the German or British mainstream.

Both texts have to be read in the social and political context of the late 1980s to mid-1990s. This decade, which was already far removed from the immigration of the 1950s and 1960s, is characterized by increasing self-awareness in former immigrants and, even more so, in their children as part of German or British society. However, under Margaret Thatcher's conservative government in Britain and the conservative Christian Democrat government led by Helmut Kohl in Germany, former immigrants were seen as a possible threat to these prospering societies, mainly in economic, yet also religious terms.⁴ This is exemplified by the aftermath of the 'Rushdie affair': the racist attacks on Muslims, and the troubles and book-

² Feridun Zaimoğlu, *Kanak Sprak: 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft*, Rotbuch, 1156, 6th edn (Hamburg: Rotbuch, 2004 [1995]), henceforth abbreviated to '*Kanak Sprak*'; further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text: 'Kanakistan, an unknown area at the margins of German society' (p. 2). I include the names, ages, and occupations of Zaimoğlu's interlocutors if they contribute to my argument, and translate the occupations of the *Kanaken* (and the *Kanakas* in Chapter 4) if the German is significantly different from the English.

³ Hanif Kureishi, *The Black Album* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996 [1995]), henceforth abbreviated to '*Album*'; further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

I also include Kureishi's short story 'My Son the Fanatic' for the illustration of particular points of discussion (in *Love in a Blue Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), pp. 119-31, henceforth abbreviated to '*Son*'; further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text). I do not have the scope to include Zaimoğlu's novel *Abschaum: Die wahre Geschichte von Ertan Ongun* [*Scum: The True Story of Ertan Ongun*] (Rotbuch, 1141, 5th edn (Hamburg: Rotbuch, 2003 [1997])) or any other of his publications here. In that fictional text in particular, Zaimoğlu's literally applies his ideas developed in *Kanak Sprak*.

⁴ Cf., for example, Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe*, Islamic Surveys, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995 [1992]).

burnings that took place in Bradford and other places in Britain after the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* in 1988. Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies argue that

the Rushdie affair is proof that a genuine plural society does not exist. More sadly, it demonstrates that, as yet, there is little desire in Western society to create a plural society. There is diversity in both Western society and the modern world order, but diversity is not necessarily plurality.⁵

Another event which enhanced the tensions between Islam and the West was the Gulf War in 1991. The media coverage of this war contributed to a general perception of the Muslim world as tense and politically unstable, which – it was feared – could also lead to problems within the Muslim communities in Germany and Britain as well as between these communities and the mainstream society.

Simultaneously, there was increasing self-awareness among second- and third-generation immigrants in both Germany and Britain. The children of former immigrants are noticeably turning away from their parents, and the latter's need or wish to integrate or assimilate. Many young Muslims living in Germany and Britain in the 1980s and 1990s seem to be looking for alternative spaces where they can prosper and redefine their identity according to their own rules.⁶

Zaimoğlu's collection of allegedly authentic 'protocols' of interviews with German Turks reflect on ways in which supposedly real-existing young Muslim men situate themselves in active contradistinction to the German (male) population, as well as to assimilated, 'Germanized' Turks. Zaimoğlu's protagonists see themselves as angry young men and Muslims in an essentially 'foreign' environment.⁷ Leslie A. Adelson points out: 'the figural counterpart to the newly emboldened woman in a headscarf is that of defiantly aggressive Turkish men, especially young ones.

⁵ Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies, *Distorted Imagination: Lessons from the Rushdie Affair* (London: Grey Seal, 1990), p. 8. See also Michael Gorra, "'Burn the Books and Trust the Book": *The Satanic Verses*, February 1989 (Appendix to Chapter Three)', in *After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 149-56, and Shabbir Akhtar, *Be Careful with Muhammad!: The Salman Rushdie Affair* (London: Bellew, 1989). For a more general approach to the 'Rushdie-affair', see Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, p. 26 and p. 153 in particular, and Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe*, pp. 158-60.

⁶ See Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe*, pp. 47-96, and Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, pp. 24-27.

⁷ Cf. Zaimoğlu's organization *Kanak Attak* which was founded in 1998 as a 'national network of anti-racist cultural political activists, accepting members of all backgrounds but dominated by migrants' (Cheesman, 'Akçam – Zaimoğlu – "Kanak Attak"', 180-195 (p. 191)).

Zaimoğlu's iconic *Kanaken* are interpellated by this figure, though they are not generally represented as Muslims.⁸ However, I am going to argue that their Muslim identity does play a role, mainly in cultural, less in religious terms.

Kureishi's text also portrays young Muslims as a group trying to establish their identity in opposition to the West. They choose to be different as a defiant response to their, or their parents', exclusion by the British mainstream. They construct an idea of Islam as a force that fights Western superiority and social exclusion. One critic claims that Kureishi has a 'desire to "explain" the contemporary resurgence of Islam in Britain.'⁹ He himself has explained his interest in the revival of Islam among young British Muslims as follows:

It perplexed me that young people, brought up in secular Britain, would turn to a form of belief that denied them the pleasures of the society in which they lived. Islam was a particularly firm way of saying 'no' to all sorts of things. Young people's lives are, for a lot of the time, devoted to pleasure.¹⁰

Here, Kureishi creates a distance between himself and his protagonists, who are shown to choose the path of religion to come to terms with their 'different' position within British society. He explains, 'in *The Black Album*, I suppose, I want to share what it might be that makes people become fundamentalists. I portray book burning as being foolish, but that fact is also banal; I want to show, too, why it may be that people get involved in it.'¹¹ Although coming from a mixed race background, he emphatically rejects the notion that he is a spokesman or cultural translator for the racially despised. Nonetheless, he has a long-term interest in race-related issues, which he also expresses in *The Black Album*.¹²

Both Zaimoğlu's and Kureishi's characters seem to be situated at the 'margins of society' – and, to different degrees, welcome this condition. As Graham Huggan points out, 'the embrace of marginality is, above all, an oppositional discursive strategy that lies in the face of hierarchical social structures and

⁸ Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, p. 130.

⁹ Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, p. 82.

¹⁰ Hanif Kureishi, 'The Road Exactly: Introduction to *My Son the Fanatic*' (1986), in *Dreaming and Scheming* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), pp. 215-221.

¹¹ Kureishi's comment in Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi*, p. 193.

¹² Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, p. 12. Cf. Kureishi's essays 'The Rainbow Sign' (1986) and 'Bradford' (1986), in *My Beautiful Laundrette and Other Writings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), pp. 71-102 and pp. 121-44.

hegemonic cultural codes.¹³ This 'oppositional discursive strategy' is highlighted by the different genres represented in this chapter: semi-fictional, textualized interviews (*Kanak Sprak*), and the fictional novel (*The Black Album*) and short story ('My Son the Fanatic'). The formal differences between these texts express the various concerns of young German and British Muslims as they are perceived by their writers. Zaimoğlu emphasizes his identification with the German Turks he supposedly interviewed. He therefore aims to create an immediate, 'authentic' experience for his readers who are part of a Germany, which can still be hostile to 'others'.¹⁴ Kureishi, in contrast, deliberately keeps a distance from his characters, which gives him and his readers the space to reflect more openly and critically.¹⁵ As I outlined in my introduction to this thesis, these diverse genres highlight the different concerns of the German and British literary market: Kureishi's decision for a novel facilitates its accessibility to a primarily British audience which has been confronted by issues of multiculturalism longer than the German readership, and therefore popularity, which seems to be something Zaimoğlu is not concerned with here. In that respect, by reproducing 'authentic' German Turkish voices, Zaimoğlu educates his audience and potentially develops greater understanding for Muslims' concerns. Furthermore, the stylistic differences capture the writer's diverse perceptions of young German Muslims (as openly radical *Kanaken*)¹⁶ and British Muslims (as religiously purer and possibly more conservative Muslims).¹⁷

¹³ Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, p. 20. See also Manuela Günter, "'Wir sind bastarde, freund ...': Feridun Zaimoglus Kanak Sprak und die performative Struktur von Identität", *Sprache und Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 30.83 (1999), 15-28, for an examination of 'margins' (as 'Rand' ('fringe'), 'Grenze' ('border'), 'Naht' ('seam')) in relation to performativity in Zaimoğlu's *Kanak Sprak* and *Koppstoff*.

¹⁴ Zaimoğlu's work of the 1990s needs to be read in the context of the racist attacks on 'foreigners' in Mölln, Solingen, and Rostock in 1991 and 1992. Furthermore, in 1993 the German government introduced changes in the asylum law which put more restrictions on who could seek asylum.

¹⁵ The issue of authenticity in relation to genre and Zaimoğlu's identification with his interlocutors will be discussed further and concluded in comparison with Emine Sevgi Özdamar's and Leila Aboulela's agendas, which are more significant in a reading of their texts, in the conclusion to Chapter 4 (Section 4.3).

¹⁶ To simplify matters, I use the term '*Kanake*' as an umbrella term for all of Zaimoğlu's interviewees, whether they describe themselves as such or not. I thus follow Zaimoğlu's own re-appropriated, originally pejorative term, but I am aware of the fact that these men cannot be generalized in that way. Similarly, I use the terms 'German Turks' or 'Muslim men', since, whether they are believers or not, have an (at least culturally) Muslim background. I thereby differentiate Zaimoğlu's interviewees from 'mainstream Germans', a term that I use to refer to the part of the German population whose anti-'foreigner' attitudes and general 'floating-with-the-current' the *Kanaken* reject and struggle against. I am aware of the problematic of this – as any – dichotomy, but refer to it throughout this chapter as it is also applied in *Kanak Sprak*.

In the following, I analyse how Zaimoğlu's and Kureishi's male characters appropriate their position at the 'margins of society' by redefining their Islam beyond Western society's as well as their parents' perceptions of the faith. The different versions of Islam – here South Asian Islam as opposed to a Turkish form of Islam – are closely linked to the interpretations of Islam of the first generation of migrants. 'Turkish Islam' is said to incorporate many pre-Islamic (tribal, nomadic, and folk) traditions and customs into its heterodox belief system.¹⁸ Furthermore, Atatürk's westernizing reforms had an enormous impact on the perception of Islam as religion and culture rather than as a way of life or political movement.¹⁹ Turkish *Gastarbeiter* tended to come from the countryside and often regarded Islam as a form of stability in Germany, something which they did not need in Turkey and, additionally, could not have practised fully there.²⁰ In South Asia, Islam is a heterogeneous religion shaped by cultural influences from other religions such as Hinduism.²¹ Many South Asian Muslim migrants came from more educated backgrounds and often rejected Islam as a sign of integration and becoming British. In both cases, these migrants' children often rebel against their parents' interpretations of Islam in non-Muslim environments. It needs to be asked how Zaimoğlu's and Kureishi's Muslims reappropriate Islam as religion or culture, and whether it can function as a means of regaining their masculinity, which they have been denied as a result of – literal and metaphorical – colonization in a predominantly secular or Christian environment. I

¹⁷ In the following, I refer to Kureishi's protagonists widely as 'British Muslims': as Islam plays a fundamental role in their creation of masculine spaces, I regard it as necessary to include the religious element in my reference to Kureishi's characters who live in Britain (London). See also Gorra, 'Conclusion: Notes Towards a Redefinition of Englishness', in *After Empire* (see Gorra, above), pp. 157-75. The debate on nationality (British or English) among 'minorities' living in Britain is a controversial one, which, however, is not my focus here.

¹⁸ The role of Turkish Islam in German transcultural writing has been discussed mainly in relation to Emine Sevgi Özdamar's work. See Littler, 'Emine Sevgi Özdamar', p. 118-39 (p. 135), and Seyhan, 'Lost in Translation', 414-26 (p. 422).

¹⁹ Faruk Şen, 'Der Islam in Europa', in *Der Islam: Eine Einführung durch Experten*. Christoph Burgmer spricht mit Reinhard Schulze, Baber Johansen, Yann Richard, Gudrun Krämer, Annemarie Schimmel, Faruk Şen und Gernot Rotter, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 2845 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1998 [1996]), pp. 82-96 (pp. 82-84).

²⁰ See Elçin Kürsat-Ahlers, 'The Turkish Minority in German Society', in *Turkish Culture in German Society Today* (see Horrocks, above), pp. 113-135 (particularly p. 118).

²¹ See Christoph S. Sprung, 'Aspekte der Heterogenität des Islam in Indien', in *Islam in Südasien*, Themenschwerpunkt des Südasien-Informationsnetz: *suedasion.info*, ed. by Nadja-Christina Schneider, Maria Framke, and Christoph Sprung (2006) <<http://www.suedasion.info/analysen/1462>> [accessed 11 November 2006] (19 para.).

look at how they create their own masculine spaces, whether and/or how their masculinity is performed, and how it is defined.

3.2 Creating Masculine Spaces

In the imperial histories of Germany and Britain, the subjugation of the colonized involved their Orientalization: according to Edward W. Said, 'the Orient [became] an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the Western misconception of the "Oriental"'.²² Orientalization became a means of domination: by attaching certain roles (such as 'the despotic or violent Oriental') to the colonized, the colonizers could easily exercise power and allege cultural superiority.²³ As Rana Kabbani points out, 'among the many themes that emerge from the European narration of the Other, two appear most strikingly. The first is the insistent claim that the East was a place of lascivious sensuality, and the second that it was a realm characterised by inherent violence.'²⁴ In the context of this chapter, I concentrate on the first theme: the 'Oriental's' sexuality which becomes an instrument for securing imperial control. As discussed by Kabbani and Said,²⁵ feminizing the 'Oriental' in particular was a significant step in the establishment of imperial power. This power, which was strongly connected to 'a male power-fantasy', was primarily based on dichotomies such as male – female, whereby the former is physically and intellectually, but also metaphorically 'stronger', and thus more positively connoted, than the latter.²⁶ This particular dichotomy can also be seen in relation to 'race': 'black' (non-British) subjects were 'feminized', disempowered, and thus more controllable, whereas the 'white' colonizers retained control of their maleness.²⁷ The dichotomy served as a

²² Said, *Orientalism*, p. 5.

²³ The notion of primarily intellectual power as a means of controlling and dominating 'the Oriental' as 'human material' is frequently discussed by Said in *Orientalism*, for example, pp. 38-40.

²⁴ Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 6.

²⁵ See Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 67, and Said, *Orientalism*, p. 182.

²⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 207.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 226-28.

justification of the colonizers' oppressive practices and supported their feeling of superiority.

I am going to argue that the young Muslims in Zaimoğlu's and Kureishi's texts feel that – because of racial prejudices – their masculinity is under threat. They feel the need to reclaim it, both as a reaction against the West (which, in Britain, is represented by the former colonizers and, in Germany, by the country's economic and political power) and as a reaction against their fathers.²⁸ The question is how the sons' generation redefine and regain their masculinity in the 'foreign' environment. It is often a strenuous and violent struggle.

Judith Butler's exploration of gender performativity serves as a valuable tool to describe how these young Muslims redefine their masculinity.²⁹ The notion of acting out a particular role comes into play. According to Butler, 'performativity is [...] not a singular "act", for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition.'³⁰ It is noticeable that the men initially perform roles within sets of norms and expectations imposed on them, yet they re-appropriate these roles as parts of their identities. There is a movement from the rejection of the 'Oriental' role to the idea of choice: the role is increasingly perceived as a chance for subversion (in, for example, the form of parody or mimicry).³¹ Butler highlights this fact when she points out that 'it is only *within* the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible.'³² One could argue that the selected texts' young men fight against the mainstream's perception of them as 'exotic Orientals'.³³ They negotiate what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak refers to as an 'exmarginal' position.³⁴ Spivak refers to herself as an

²⁸ For the latter point, see Section 3.2.3. See also Petra Fachinger, *Rewriting Germany from the Margins: 'Other' German Literature of the 1980s and 1990s* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), p. 108.

²⁹ The following remarks on Butler's performativity theory and on marginality are also significant for my analysis of representations of Muslim femininity in Chapter 4.

³⁰ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 12.

³¹ For parody, see Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 176-77; Butler refers to gender parody or pastiche (as gender 'acts') here, but it can equally be applied to the parody of any role that is socially acquired and then subverted. For mimicry, see Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', pp. 85-92. See also Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*. The authors point out numerous subversion processes, primarily in terms of linguistics and literature.

³² Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 185; original emphasis.

³³ Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, p. 22.

³⁴ Spivak referred to in *ibid.*, p. 23.

academic with a 'third-world' background; someone who has escaped this environment and now lives in the West.³⁵ She also (partly self-ironically) acknowledges the 'luxury' of this position that enjoys 'academic approval'.³⁶ Although the young Muslims I am concerned with in this chapter have an entirely different background from 'third-world intellectuals' living in the West, they are also aware of their situation at the 'margins of society' and consciously deal with it: on the one hand, these Muslims perceive 'margins' as a by-gone experience – they have forced their way into the 'centre' (the consciousness of the mainstream); on the other, they purposefully use these 'margins' as a liberated position from where they can challenge the 'centre', that is, the mainstream and its perceptions of those placed at the 'exotic margins' of society.

Zaimoğlu exposes 'margins' as an exoticizing force. He makes this explicit by describing a variety of German Turks. In his preface to *Kanak Sprak*, Zaimoğlu lists the different roles *Kanaken* can play, thus breaking the group perceived collectively as 'foreigners' or 'Turks' by mainstream Germans into subgroups and individuals.³⁷

Über einen Zeitraum von zwölf Monaten gelang es mir, das Spektrum weit zu öffnen: vom Müllabfuhr-Kanaken bis zum Kümmel-Transsexuellen, vom hehlenden Klein-Ganeff, dessen Geschenke ich nur mühsam zurückweisen konnte, bis zum goldbehängten Mädchenhändler, vom posenreichen Halbstarken bis zum mittelschweren Islamisten. Sie alle eint das Gefühl, 'in

³⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Theory in the Margin: Coetzee's *Foe* Reading Defoe's *Crusoe/Roxana*', in *Consequences of Theory: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1987-88*, ed. by Jonathan Arac and Barbara Johnson, New Series, 14 (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 154-80 (p. 154; original emphasis): 'Within this arena of tertiary education in literature, the upwardly exmarginal, *justifiably* searching for validation, can help modify marginality'.

³⁶ Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, p. 23.

³⁷ '*Kanaken*' is not an exclusive term for German Turks and can include everybody who is politically active in race-related issues. See Cheesman, 'Akçam – Zaimoğlu – "Kanak Attak"', 180-195 (p. 187): '"Kanak" is a parody identity, a flagrantly artificial and intentionally slippery construct: Zaimoğlu denies that only "Turkish Germans" or "German Turks", or only "ethnically non-German" German denizens and citizens can be "Kanaken" or "Kanakstas" [which is a combination of the words "*Kanake*" and "gangster", thus emphasizing the "fight"-aspect of this identity; F.M.]. Instead it is a political category: "Viele Deutsche sind Kanakstas. Du bist in dem Moment Kanaksta, wo du die Gesellschaft durchschaust." The launch of "Kanak" as a cultural label aimed to make visible the artificiality and rigidity of the conventionally ascribed identities derived from the history of colonialism and of post-colonial migrations.' See also 'Kanak Attak's' manifesto <www.kanak-attak.de/ka/down/pdf/textos.pdf>, pp. 1-2 (German) and pp. 1-2 (English) [accessed 10 May 2007], for a comment on who they are and who they include. However, being of Turkish origin himself, Zaimoğlu seems to focus on German Turks in *Kanak Sprak*.

der Liga der Verdammten zu spielen', gegen kulturhegemoniale Ansprüche bestehen zu müssen. Noch ist das tragende Element dieser Community ein negatives Selbstbewußtsein, wie es in der scheinbaren Selbstbezeichnung seinen oberflächlichen Ausdruck findet: Kanake! Dieses verunglimpfende Hetzwort wird zum identitätsstiftenden Kennwort, zur verbindenden Klammer dieser 'Lumpenethnier'. Analog zur Black-consciousness-Bewegung in den USA werden sich die einzelnen Kanak-Subidentitäten zunehmend übergreifender Zusammenhänge und Inhalte bewußt. Die Entmystifizierung ist eingeleitet, der Weg zu einem neuen Realismus gelegt. Inmitten der Mainstreamkultur entstehen die ersten rohen Entwürfe für eine ethnizistische Struktur in Deutschland.³⁸

Zaimoğlu seemingly takes an anthropological approach to the *Kanaken* he met, thus re-appropriating and reclaiming the traditionally Western role of the observer and classifier:³⁹ he claims to have observed and 'studied' them, which resulted in his record and categorization of *Kanaken*. İnci Dirim and Peter Auer identify an exoticizing element in Zaimoğlu's approach:

Die "Kanaken" wurden also in ihrer ethnischen Sonderart für die Deutschen – sprachlich und inhaltlich – unverständlich (gemacht). Dass Zaimoğlu diese Distanz durch seinen Schreibstil selbst kreiert, wurde dabei übersehen [...]. [...] *Kanak Sprak* hat wesentlich dazu beigetragen, die (jungen, großstädtischen) Türken in Deutschland in der Öffentlichkeit zu ethnisieren und sogar zu exotisieren.⁴⁰

³⁸ Zaimoglu, preface 'Kanak Sprak', in *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 9-18 (pp. 16-17): 'Over a period of twelve months I managed to open up the spectrum wide: from the garbage removal-Kanake to the *Kümmel* [cumin]-transsexual, from the dealing petty-berk, whose presents I could only reject with difficulty, to the white slaver covered in gold, from the yob abundant with poses to the semi-radical Islamist. They are all united by the feeling of "playing in the league of the damned", of resisting culturally determined hegemonic demands. As yet the fundamental element of this community is a negative self-awareness as it is expressed superficially in the seeming self-accusation: *Kanake!* This defaming abusive word is turned into a code word which creates identity, into a uniting brace for this "ethnic underclass". In analogy with the Black Consciousness movement in the USA the various *Kanak*-subidentities increasingly become aware of overarching contexts and contents. The demystification has started, the way to a new realism been smoothed. Among the mainstream culture, there emerge the first rough concepts for an ethnicistic structure in Germany'.

³⁹ Feridun Zaimoglu, 'KümmelContra' in *Kursbuch Jugendkultur: Stile, Szenen und Identitäten vor der Jahrtausendwende*, ed. by SPoKK (Arbeitsgruppe für Symbolische Politik, Kultur und Kommunikation) (Mannheim: Bollmann, 1997), pp. 174-81 (p. 174); Zaimoğlu also speaks of 'kanak-kunde' ('*kanak science*') here, thus making the ridiculous nature of his enterprise clear.

⁴⁰ İnci Dirim and Peter Auer, *Türkisch sprechen nicht nur die Türken: Über die Unschärfebeziehung zwischen Sprache und Ethnie in Deutschland*, Linguistik – Impulse und Tendenzen, 4 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), p. 7: 'The "Kanaken" were, therefore, (made) – linguistically and textually – unintelligible for Germans within their ethnic distinctiveness. It was ignored that Zaimoğlu created this distance himself through his writing style. [...] *Kanak Sprak* has significantly contributed to the public ethnicization or even exoticization of (young, urban) German Turks'.

However, I read Zaimoğlu's alleged ethnicization as a deliberate form of subversion. It is the beginning of the self-imposed exclusivity that many of the *Kanaken* aim at because they do not want to be mistaken for mainstream Germans or for assimilated, and therefore (in their eyes) weak or emasculated Turks. They are all united in the fight against cultural hegemony which gradually shifts a negative self-perception to a positive one. Stuart Hall points out that 'cultural hegemony is [...] always about shifting the balance of power in the relations of culture; it is always about changing the dispositions and the configurations of cultural power, not getting out of it.'⁴¹ The *Kanaken* shift this power by breaking (Turkish-)German culture into subidentities based on the fight against 'Mültikültüralizm' (the *Kanak*-term for 'multiculturalism'),⁴² whilst criticizing homogenizing tendencies amongst both the mainstream and any subculture.⁴³

Part of this subversion process is the re-appropriation of the term '*Kanake*'. Similarly to the term 'nigger', it is usually used pejoratively to describe a gap between 'foreigners' and the mainstream. However, Zaimoğlu, the author, as well as most of his characters redefine '*Kanake*' as a means of expressing proud difference from the German population. In the Hawaiian/Polynesian language *kanaka* means 'human being' or 'man', and denotes the native population of the South Sea Islands, particularly New Caledonia.⁴⁴ The German word '*Kanake*' has a derogatory meaning referring to immigrants and foreigners from Southern and Eastern Europe, and from the Middle East.⁴⁵ Similarly, some German Turks refer to themselves as '*Kümmel*'

⁴¹ Stuart Hall, 'What Is This "Black" in Black Popular Culture?', in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, Comedia (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 465-75 (p. 468).

⁴² Manifesto of 'Kanak Attak', p. 1. The exaggerated use of 'ü', which is also a sound/letter in Turkish, appears as linguistic subversion that immediately draws attention to the (culturally) Turkish component of *Kanak Sprak*.

⁴³ See Feridun Zaimoğlu, 'sıcarım süppkültürünüze, züppeler! Ich scheiße auf eure Subkultur, ihr Schmöcke!', in *Mainstream der Minderheiten: Pop in der Kontrollgesellschaft*, ed. by Tom Holert and Mark Terkessidis (Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv, 1996), pp. 86-95. For a discussion of subculture and youth see *Resistance Through Rituals*, ed. by Hall and Jefferson (see Hall and Jefferson, above), esp. John Clarke and others, 'Subcultures, Cultures and Class: A Theoretical Overview', pp. 9-74. Cf. also the public debate on 'Deutsche Leitkultur' ('German leading culture') triggered by Friedrich Merz's (then chairman of the CDU in the German *Bundestag*) comment on rules for immigration and integration in the newspaper *Die Welt* on 25 October 2000.

⁴⁴ Entry on 'kanaka', in *Oxford English Dictionary Online* <<http://dictionary.oed.com>> [accessed 19 June 2006].

⁴⁵ Friedrich Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, 22nd edn, in cooperation with Max Bürgisser and Bernd Gregor, fully rev. by Elmar Seebold (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989 [1883]), p. 351: 'eine abwertende Bezeichnung für südliche Ausländer'.

(‘Cumin’) (derived from the pejorative expression ‘*Kümmeltürke*’ (‘Cumin Turk’)) to subvert a common perception of Turks as distinctly foreign people, something which seems to come across literally through their strange cooking and eating habits (their allegedly high consumption of cumin).⁴⁶ I also regard ‘*Fremdländer*’ (‘foreigner’) as opposed to the more commonly used ‘*Ausländer*’ (‘foreigner’) as a deliberate form of protest: *Kanaken* who use this word make the mainstream aware of its deliberate and ridiculous detachment from people of a ‘different’ background.

Yet despite the fact that Zaimoğlu freely appropriates these terms to label the young German Turks he interviewed, some *Kanaken* have identified potential problems with the expression ‘*Kanake*’:⁴⁷ it is still often perceived as a racist term and thus an insult. Furthermore, it is felt to be a creation of the writer Zaimoğlu.⁴⁸ This raises the question who is allowed to use the word and who not: are only German Turks in a position to employ it as a form of subversion, and are mainstream Germans not allowed to employ it as their use would imply racism?

Other German Turks emphasize that the word ‘*Kanake*’ strengthens the community as it brings the common experiences of migrants, or rather migrants’ children (post-migrants), to the fore. Thus, nationality or citizenship becomes less significant. *Kanaken* create their own ‘nation’ (an issue which I shall come back to in relation to Islam as an alternative, virtual nation as opposed to a real nation). The term is also used to shed light on the relationship of the *Kanaken* with their parents (former *Gastarbeiter*) whereby ‘*Kanake*’ describes the second- and third generations’ active rebellion against the mainstream, and ‘*Gastarbeiter*’ relates to a passive acceptance of whatever the German state has imposed on them. Hence ‘*Kanake*’ expresses a political attitude: in this case, the word’s meaning literally shifts from racist connotations to a political form of protest. It embraces the ‘solidarity in a common struggle’⁴⁹ by telling ‘the history of the resistance of migrants’.⁵⁰ *Kanaken*

⁴⁶ According to Kluge, in the late 18th century, ‘*Kümmeltürke*’ referred to ‘a student from Halle’ in whose surroundings cumin was grown. This area was also called ‘*Kümmeltürkei*’ (‘Cumin Turkey’). Today, ‘*Kümmeltürke*’ is an abusive term for Turkish *Gastarbeiter* (ibid., p. 418).

⁴⁷ The following discussion of the differences in meaning and connotation of the term ‘*Kanake*’ is based on Güngör and Loh, *Fear of a Kanak Planet*, pp. 27–40.

⁴⁸ By choosing the name ‘*Kanak Attak*’ for his anti-racist network mentioned earlier, Zaimoğlu both re-invented the term ‘*Kanake*’ and imposed it upon a group of people (namely primarily young German Turks) who would not necessarily call themselves that or identify with this group.

⁴⁹ Güngör and Loh, *Fear of a Kanak Planet*, p. 31: ‘Solidarität in einem gemeinsamen Kampf’.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 37: ‘die Geschichte des migrantischen Widerstandes’.

aim at 'appropriating this history, distributing it, learning from it, and putting themselves in this tradition'.⁵¹ This point is crucial: on the one hand, the *Kanaken* actively fight against the passiveness of their parents and against the stigmatization forced on them by the mainstream; on the other, they use – in Güngör's and Loh's terms – their 'Geschichtsbewußtsein' ('awareness of history' which relates to their parents and their past) and their 'kollektives Gedächtnis' ('collective memory' which relates to them as a group, not individuals) as a means of creative struggle.⁵² It is precisely this interaction between past and present, group and individual which determines the position of the *Kanaken* in German society.

Zaimoğlu frequently refers to a particularly prominent differentiation among German Turks: the two opposing types of the infantilized and emasculated '*Lieb-Alilein*' ('Nice Little Ali') and of the strong and hypermasculine '*Kanake*'. This opposition verbalizes the fight not only against those who do not accept 'other' Germans, but also a fight within the group: Zaimoğlu's *Kanaken* heavily criticize assimilated Turks because in their view, only a *Kanake* fights and can subvert, and can raise awareness of different ways of being (Turkish-)German within the dominant German society.

In Kureishi's texts, former immigrants and their children are primarily perceived as one group and not differentiated according to particular characteristics as they are in *Kanak Sprak*. *The Black Album* mainly portrays one group that sets itself off from other Muslims: young Muslims who rediscover their religion as a means of differentiating themselves from the West as well as from their parents. Kureishi's characters develop an increasing self-awareness as Muslims, and not simply as immigrants or 'Pakis' (*Album*, p. 128): they emphasize the religious aspect of their identity rather than their cultural roots, including their parents' history of colonialism and immigration. In both Zaimoğlu's and Kureishi's texts, notions of masculinity are discussed in relation to negotiating and performing a male Muslim's identity. It is remarkable that both Zaimoğlu and Kureishi draw their attention to

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 39: 'Geschichte [...] anzueignen, sie zu verbreiten, weiterzuerzählen, um aus ihr zu lernen und andererseits uns selbst in diese bestimmte Tradition zu stellen'.

⁵² Ibid., p. 39.

young *male* and radical Muslims and their fighting attitudes, and not to the Muslim community as a whole.⁵³

Three points are at the centre of the discussion of negotiating masculinity: firstly, the notion of belonging and creating new spaces for the development of a new kind of 'Muslim masculinity'; secondly, the idea that these 'new' identities are based on exclusivity, and a questioning and negotiation of authenticity; and, thirdly, the redefinition of community and family.

3.2.1 The Struggle to Belong

Zaimoğlu and Kureishi portray young Muslims who create their own spaces where they can express their individual identities. Being (forcefully or deliberately) different in a particular society can lead to new and exclusive definitions of belonging. Immigrants are often denied a home in their 'host' society. Even the young Muslims I am concerned with here, who were born in Germany or Britain, feel that many 'native' German and British citizens do not allow them to regard their parents' country of immigration as home. They are forced to create their own spaces, usually in groups.

Often regarded as a *Bildungsroman*,⁵⁴ *The Black Album* tells the story of Shahid Hasan,⁵⁵ an undergraduate student of Pakistani origin studying at a college in London. Having newly arrived in the big city, he meets the political activist Riaz and his religious group. Initially, Shahid is impressed by the group's activities and gets involved in their struggle for social justice. Yet during the course of the novel Shahid

⁵³ However, under alleged pressure by German Turkish women, Zaimoğlu published a female version of *Kanak Sprak* whose speakers also emphasize the need to fight for their rights among the German mainstream: *Koppstoff: Kanaka Sprak vom Rande der Gesellschaft*, which will be examined in Chapter 4.

⁵⁴ Roy Sommer emphasizes the 'Motiv der Suche' ('motive of search') in *Fictions of Migration*, p. 117. See also Mark Stein's approach to 'novels of transformation' in *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2004), particularly the chapter 'Of Aunties and Elephants: Kureishi's Aesthetics of Postethnicity', pp. 108-42.

⁵⁵ The name 'Shahid' means in both Arabic and Persian 'martyr'. In the Qur'an, *shahid* is identified as the 'Getötete[] auf dem Weg Gottes' ('the killed one on God's path'), which means he is killed whilst fighting for God. This name emphasizes an active, fighting element, and reveals the relation between 'fight' (jihad) and martyrdom (see website of the Zentrum für Literaturforschung, Berlin, Research Focus: 'Figurationen des Märtyrers in nahöstlicher und europäischer Literatur' <<http://www.zfl.gwz-berlin.de/forschung/laufende-projekte/maertyrer/>> [accessed 02 July 2007]).

is increasingly disturbed by the group's 'fundamentalist' ideas and extreme measures in their fight against the West (such as the burning of *The Satanic Verses* at the end of the novel). Simultaneously, Shahid is having a love affair with his lecturer Deedee Osgood, a Left-liberal feminist. He is in constant conflict with himself on whether he should support the group or his lover (and their contradictory political attitudes respectively). The story ends with Shahid and Deedee finding reconciliation in their provisional relationship.

This sense of not belonging and the search for alternative forms of belonging is exemplified by a conversation Deedee remembers having had with Chad (a member of Riaz's fundamentalist religious group):

'He said to me once, "I am homeless." I said, "You've got nowhere to live?" "No," he replied. "I have no country." I told him, "You're not missing much." "But I don't know what it is to feel like a normal citizen."' (Album, p. 108)

Here, the longing for a home is the beginning of the search for an alternative 'home'. For many British and German people with a home, this feeling is often unknown and incomprehensible (Deedee automatically means a place to live and not the emotional home Chad refers to here). Once again, the experience of the British Empire needs to be taken into account: colonized peoples usually regarded Britain as the 'mother country' (as they were taught to), but, when they moved to this 'centre' they had to realize that they were not welcome there.⁵⁶ For the children of these immigrants, this inner division, which their parents could compensate by a longing look towards their former home and/or a great effort to integrate or assimilate, can result in a continuous feeling of being excluded everywhere – in their parents' home country as well as in their own home country. This seems to be a particularly pressing issue for young British Muslims, many of whom reach for their religion as a way of finding the stability such a 'home' can provide. Kureishi emphasizes this fact when he says that 'fundamentalist Islam could do this [provide spiritual comfort, or community and

⁵⁶ See Kureishi, 'The Road Exactly', pp. 215-221 (p. 219): 'Yet all along it was taken for granted that "belonging", which means, in a sense, not having to notice where you are, and, more importantly, not being seen as different, would happen eventually. [...] The "West" was a dream that didn't come true. But one cannot go home again. One is stuck'.

solidarity; F.M.] in a country that was supposed to be home but which could, from day to day, seem alien.’⁵⁷

In contrast, Zaimoğlu’s characters seem to be used to being different, which may be due to a less complicated relationship between Germany and Turkey in terms of imperial interests:⁵⁸ as Akay says, ‘Den Fremdländer kannst du nimmer aus der Fresse wischen’⁵⁹ (Akay, 29, vom Flohmarkt [from the flea market]; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 23). These young German Turks’ parents came to Germany as ‘foreigners’ – and usually remained in that position. Growing up in Germany, their children often tried to become ‘German’, but then had to realize that the mainstream still regarded them as ‘foreign’. Zaimoğlu’s protagonists have learned to accept this label as something that one has to deal with – and ultimately be proud of. On the basis of this new sense of ‘belonging to difference’,⁶⁰ it seems that young German Turks negotiate a number of ways of looking for alternative spaces of belonging. They choose various paths (such as music, the pursuit of sexual desires, poetry, or simply doing nothing), where Kureishi’s Muslim protagonists focus exclusively on their religion. The question is whether the approaches of the *Kanaken* are less of an escape route than Islam might be, or whether they are an escape of a different kind. Is the *Kanak*-version of fight more ‘creative’ than, for example, acts of book-burning as a direct expression of rage?

⁵⁷ Kureishi, ‘The Road Exactly’, pp. 215–221 (pp. 220–21).

⁵⁸ However, Emine Sevgi Özdamar points out that one can describe the relationship between Germany and Turkey as that between colonizer and colonized (in David Horrocks and Eva Kolinsky, ‘Living and Writing in Germany: Emine Sevgi Özdamar in Conversation with David Horrocks and Eva Kolinsky’, in *Turkish Culture in German Society Today* (see Horrocks, above), pp. 45–54 (pp. 52–53)). See also Özdamar’s story ‘Fahrrad auf dem Eis’ [‘Bicycle on the Ice’] in her collection of stories *Der Hof im Spiegel* [*The Courtyard in the Mirror*] (KiWi, 619 (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2001), pp. 77–112). Here the narrator tells her conversation partner: ‘Mir kommen die Männer so weich vor. Sie haben am Meer gestanden und haben gesehen, daß die Welt groß ist. Und Deutschland ist ein Wald. Bis sie den Weg rausgefunden hatten, war die Kolonialzeit vorbei. Man sagt, deswegen haben die Deutschen die Kolonien im Land selber geschaffen, die Gastarbeiter.’ (‘I think the men are really soft. They stood by the sea and saw that the world was huge. And Germany is a forest. Until they had found the way out of it, the colonial period was over. It is said that this is the reason why the Germans have created colonies in the country itself, the *Gastarbeiter*.’) (p. 95).

⁵⁹ ‘You can’t wipe the foreigner from your face’.

⁶⁰ Cf. Begemann, “‘Kanakensprache’”, pp. 209–20 (p. 218): ‘Darüber hinaus erwächst Identität hier lediglich aus der Negation und dem Bewußtsein der Differenz.’ (‘Furthermore, here, identity arises merely from the negation and the awareness of difference.’).

3.2.1.1 Opposition to the Mainstream

Among the texts' young Muslims, the need to belong somewhere is not expressed in terms of assimilation – as it was for the first-generation immigrants –, but in opposition to the West. There tends to exist a deep mistrust for anything Western amongst these children of former immigrants, which may be based on (in the case of British Muslims) their parents' humiliating imperial history or (in the case of German Muslims) their parents' equally humiliating *Gastarbeiter*-history; hence they have no desire to be 'like them'. As Büyük Ibo puts it in Zaimoğlu's account: 'Den deutschen traust du nich übern weg, weil sie, die haben durchblick in ne andre richtung, und da willst du ums verrecken nich hin'⁶¹ (Büyük Ibo, 18, Packer; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 45). This attitude implies a reversal of old imperial patterns and a 'repuzzling of history' as a means to 'create security and new self-esteem'.⁶² Mimicry – by which I mean the effort to integrate, to become like Germans or the British as the state expects them to – occurs to a limited extent only and exclusively as a means to an end: the West is only desirable as a dwelling place; its values are increasingly replaced by radically different or more traditional values, or re-appropriated for the needs and desires of a generation that feels more consciously excluded than its parents. In Zaimoğlu's account, Hasan, for example, expresses this feeling:

Auch mit der familie und auch mit nem namen bleibst du ein bastard, du hast krause haare und benimmst dich nicht wie die deutschen, denen das licht längst ausgegangen is, du hast was vor, aber ne menge arschlöcher möchten dich aus der gegend haben, und wenn du dich nicht wehrst, kappen sie dir die leitung und machen dich zur dunklen memme [...].⁶³ (Hasan, 13, Streuner und Schüler [tramp and pupil]; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 93)

In *Kanak Sprak*, the opposition to the *alemannen* (German people) becomes the determining factor in their self-positioning. Interestingly, the choice of word for the

⁶¹ 'You don't trust the Germans, because they, they look in another direction, and there's no way you don't want to get there'.

⁶² Güngör and Loh, *Fear of a Kanak Planet*, p. 58: 'wir repuzzeln die Geschichte'; '[Aber nur die Beschäftigung mit diesem Wissen] erzeugt Sicherheit und führt zu neuem Selbstbewusstsein'.

⁶³ 'Even with the family and even with a name you remain a bastard, you have frizzy hair and you don't behave like the Germans whose light has long been switched off, you've planned something, but a lot of assholes want to get rid of you, and if you don't struggle, they will cut you off and turn you into a dark coward [...]'.

Germans derives from Turkish (*alman*) but is linguistically Germanized – another form of subversion. Zaimoğlu's interlocutors make clear who has the (linguistic) power; they have the advantage of being bi- or even multilingual (often as opposed to their parents) and are able to show disrespect for the Germans who possibly do not understand this term, or at least where it comes from. They seem to want to show their discontent with the way the German mainstream still misjudges and underestimates them.

There is a more religious dimension in *The Black Album*. The 'fundamentalist' characters regard the West as decadent and hence deplorable: Riaz asserts that 'we have to guard against the hypocritical and smug intellectual atmosphere of Western civilization' (*Album*, p. 99). Riaz' reaction is based on a complex relationship between the Muslims and Britain that derives from colonial history: the main difference between the interaction between 'Muslims at the margins' with the 'centre' in Germany and Britain is that the British Empire first came to its colonies and then the colonized came back to the 'centre', whereas the *Gastarbeiter* exclusively came to a 'centre' which did not have a previous influence in their country of origin. One aspect illustrates that point: education. Formerly colonized people tend to have a twofold relationship with knowledge they gained from the imperial power: it was – more or less – openly received, but now the younger generation is increasingly seeing its faults (primarily the exclusion of the knowledge of the colonized) and are turning against it:

[Riaz:] 'We are educated, a little. We are not slaves day and night in some shop or factory. But that means we have other duties, doesn't it? We cannot just forsake our people and live for ourselves.'

[Shahid:] 'No.'

[Riaz:] 'If we did, wouldn't that mean we had totally absorbed the Western morals, which are totally individualistic?' (*Album*, p. 173)

Riaz makes use of having had a Western education (and this, not an 'Oriental' education, is what Riaz means here) as a subversion process without falling into the trap of 'Western individualism'.⁶⁴ He nourishes the idea that there is a duty to help those who could not 'enjoy' a Western education which is, after all, a convenient

⁶⁴ Cf. Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, p. 88.

form of survival in the West. It can be argued that Riaz exercises a different form of superiority and patronage: throughout the novel, Riaz perceives himself as a leader, which I see as a form of individualism and (mainly intellectual) power, even if this is different to what Riaz means in this conversation. He unconsciously shows that a simple dichotomy between Islam and the West does not work, and that mutual influences cannot easily be stopped.

The use of standard English also comes into play. It was taught by the colonizers, the colonized absorbed it, but now, when there is some distance from linguistic imperialism, it can be mimicked by their children. In *The Black Album*, Shahid 'asserted that Papa's generation, with their English accents, foreign degrees and British snobbery, assumed their own people were inferior' (*Album*, pp. 91-92). This demonstrates the complex relationship between Islam and the West, and the impact of Western ideas and social practices on immigrants. Linguistic subversion processes are more prominent amongst Zaimoğlu's *Kanaken*: they create their own linguistic spaces based on a mixture of German, slang, colloquialisms, and other languages – their '*Kanak Sprak*' ('Kanak Speak') that, according to Zaimoğlu, results in 'eine Art Creol oder Rotwelsch mit geheimen Codes und Zeichen',⁶⁵ and thus deliberately excludes those who do not understand. (Standard Turkish does not play a significant role in the creation of '*Kanak Sprak*'.)⁶⁶ These linguistic subversion processes seem to be more effective in Germany than in Britain: the reason might be that the *Kanaken* are less tied to an ideal of producing the standard language as a result of (linguistic) colonization, which, even today, has an impact on

⁶⁵ Zaimoglu, preface '*Kanak Sprak*', in *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 9-18 (p. 13): 'a kind of creole or *Rotwelsch* [thieve's argot] with secret codes and signs'. As the secret language of thieves, '*Rotwelsch*' has negative implications. I assume Zaimoğlu employs the term sociologically in order to show the criminal element of some *Kanaken*, yet also linguistically in order to emphasize the exclusivity of this language which is only understood by a specific group of people. The linguistic aspect of the 'language' '*Kanak Sprak*' is underlined by Zaimoğlu's equal mentioning of the term 'creole', a hybrid language created through the merging of various languages.

⁶⁶ For a linguistic analysis of *Kanak Sprak*, see Yildiz, 'Critically "*Kanak*"', pp. 319-40; Yildiz focuses on the use of English, Turkish, German, north German vernacular, rap, *Rotwelsch*, and Jewish languages. She claims that Zaimoğlu 'has created a distinctive style and language that is neither found on the streets, no elsewhere in language' (p. 320). She also draws attention to 'fraternal relationships' and the 'emphasis on masculinity' that is inherent in *Kanak Sprak* (p. 325).

See also, for example, Cheesman, 'Akçam – Zaimoğlu – "*Kanak Attak*"', 180-195 (p. 183) on the untranslatability of *Kanak Sprak*, and p. 184 on the inventive use of language in *Kanak Sprak*. Kein Nghi Ha takes a postcolonial standpoint and regards the language '*Kanak Sprak*' as an '*unreine, kreolisierte Sprache*' ('impure, creolized language') and points out the '*Karnevalisierung und Dezentrierung der herrschenden Herrensprache*' ('carnivalization and de-centering of the ruling master-language') (Ha, *Ethnizität und Migration*, p. 165; original emphasis).

a number of postcolonial people, and therefore more free to play with language as a form of struggle.⁶⁷ People from former colonies often grew up with the ambition to produce standard English as proof of their equal status without realizing that this aim – even if reached – did not automatically mean social equality with the former colonizers. This mindset tends to be still prominent in the new country of residence which prevents forms of subversion on a linguistic level.

More subversion processes take place when Western expectations of exoticism and difference are appropriated as a tool to demonstrate the superficiality of these labels.⁶⁸ By recognizing these stereotypes as a means of subversion, the postcolonial – and I mean the minorities' potential to act against exoticizing stereotypes – becomes a 'de-exoticising category'.⁶⁹

[Shahid:] 'Please, Strapper, you said the whites are selfish. I need your help. I thought you loved Asian people.'

[Strapper:] 'Not when they get too fucking Westernized. You all wanna be just like us now. It's the wrong turnin'.' (*Album*, p. 195)

Initially, immigrants were pushed into a racial corner. They were – and still are – referred to as 'Asians' and defined by their origin, but also by the darker colour of their skin rather than by religion. However, Shahid seems to use this position deliberately as a form of opposition. By reiterating Strapper's racist attitude based on the dichotomy of 'the whites' vs. 'Asian people', he both becomes part of this discourse in order to gain a position (and ultimately a voice) in the mainstream and (speaking as somebody from the 'inferior race') he uses this dichotomy as a means to an end. He wants Strapper's help – even by means of racist discourse. Although this particular subversion process is a limited one, it, nonetheless, shows that former immigrants' children appropriate racist discourse as a tool for survival. This signifies that it partly loses its original force as verbal suppression of people with a different skin colour.

⁶⁷ Language issues such as linguistic subversion processes as a means of struggle seem to be a particularly useful tool for women and will be discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter also entails a more detailed analysis of the language '*Kanak Sprak*', particularly in relation to *Koppstoff*.

⁶⁸ Cf. Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, pp. 13-14: 'Exoticism [...] might be described as a kind of semiotic circuit that oscillates between the opposite poles of strangeness and familiarity. [...] As a system [...] exoticism functions along predictable lines but with unpredictable content'.

⁶⁹ Huggan on Said in *ibid.*, p. 19.

It seems that the self-definition of Zaimoğlu's *Kanaken* and Kureishi's Muslims is primarily one of opposition: they know what they are *not* in relation to the German and British population. This is reminiscent of imperialist discourse – the colonizers' positive self-definition in opposition to the colonized with their allegedly negative (such as feminine, despotic, or violent) characteristics. By appropriating the discourse of self-definition, these young Muslims subvert 'the whites'' attitudes towards them primarily by not taking them seriously. However, spaces of belonging are also created by searching for and finding stability in the form of religion.

3.2.1.2 Rediscovering and Re-appropriating Religion

Belonging can also be expressed through religion in order to establish a counter-picture to both Western Christians (as in Zaimoğlu's texts) and Western immorality (as in Kureishi's texts). In this way, Islam can become *the* factor of identification: it only belongs to these young Muslims and is not shared by the secular or Christian West. On a political level, it can also contribute to the idea of a nation. The 'Nation of Islam' with Malcolm X as its most prominent representative, for example, emphasizes the transnational and transcultural nature of Islam.⁷⁰ It embraces Muslims of all cultural backgrounds and unites them as the community of believers, the *umma*.⁷¹ A virtual substitutes for a real nation; but it needs to be kept in mind that Zaimoğlu's and Kureishi's Muslims do not have a choice. They largely feel that Germany and Britain do not welcome them as part of the nation.

This idea goes hand-in-hand with the Black Consciousness Movement in the USA,⁷² which is also reflected in the notion of brotherhood fostered by the *Kanaken* and British Muslims: it expresses not only a sense of creating a unity among themselves as male Muslims but also a wider connection and solidarity with their forefathers in the USA:

⁷⁰ See Natambu, *The Life and Work of Malcolm X*, particularly 'Chapter 10: Malcolm Discovers the Nation of Islam', pp. 127-42. Personally, Kureishi does not approve of the separatist nature of the 'Nation of Islam' (Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, p. 3), nor, in the end, did Malcolm X (see Natambu, *The Life and Work of Malcolm X*, pp. 299-302).

⁷¹ This idea is celebrated on the hajj where nations become less important, and the experience of belonging to Islam is of much greater importance (see Chapter 2, particularly Section 2.2.1.2).

⁷² The 'Nation of Islam' was part of this movement and appropriated the idea of religious 'brotherhood' (cf. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, p. 452). The *Kanaken* and British Muslims discussed here partly use this idea, yet primarily apply it for expressing their masculinity.

wir sind hier allesamt nigger, wir haben unser ghetto, wir schleppen's überall hin, wir dampfen fremdländisch, unser schweiß ist nigger, unser leben ist nigger, die goldketten sind nigger, unsere zinken und unsere fressen und unser eigener stil ist so verdammt nigger, daß wir wie blöde an unsrer haut kratzen, und dabei kapieren wir, daß zum nigger nicht die olle pechhaut gehört, aber zum nigger gehört ne ganze menge anderssein und andres leben. Die haben schon unsre heimat prächtig erfunden: kanake da, kanake dort, wo du auch hingerätst, kanake blinkt dir in oberfetten lettern sogar im traum, wenn du pennst und denkst: joker, jetzt bist du in deiner eigenen sendung.⁷³ (Akay, 29, vom Flohmarkt [from the flea market]; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 25)

In this quotation, 'nigger' serves as an all-embracing term for ethnically different people who fight for social justice. As this struggle was partly successful in the USA, *Kanaken* seem to regard their 'black brothers' as a kind of role model for the struggle. This is also expressed in their use of the English language (for example, 'nigger', 'joker'): cultural differences do not play a role any longer; it is the position of social inferiority that unites them.⁷⁴ Both the labels 'nigger' and '*Kanake*' may be terms usually used pejoratively to define 'these foreigners' in opposition to the German population, but that use is now subverted by this group of young men, who appropriate these labels to describe themselves as proudly different – not as victims. Through the 'abuse' of the racist term, they can – according to Kein Nghi Ha – 'suppress and deactivate its racist connotations'.⁷⁵ This is the point where performative processes begin: the *Kanaken* re-appropriate an historically determined term and redirect historical oppression into a political struggle, whose ultimate aim is the regaining of their masculinity as a form of power. Jonathan Culler's examination of the performative can be usefully applied to the struggle of the *Kanaken*. He writes:

⁷³ 'We are all nigger, we have our ghetto, we drag it with us everywhere, we're steaming foreign, our sweat is nigger, our lives are nigger, the gold chains are nigger, our conks and our traps and our own style are so damn nigger, so that we scratch our skin like mad and then we get it that there's more to nigger than this old pitch-black skin, but you need a whole lot of being-different and living differently to be a nigger. They have invented our home marvellously: *kanake* here, *kanake* there, wherever you end up, *kanake* flashes in huge letters even when you're dreaming, when you're sleeping and thinking: joker, now you're in your own show'.

⁷⁴ See Yildiz, 'Critically "*Kanak*"', pp. 319-40 (pp. 321-30) on the use of English in *Kanak Sprak*: 'As a third term and language, English breaks down the binary between sole affiliation with either Turkish or German' (p. 329). She describes the interaction between globalization and the 'threat of cultural Americanization' (p. 321) by using English and the *Kanaken*'s local appropriation of English (p. 322). Yildiz also points out the transnational role of rap (pp. 327-30) (see also Ha, *Ethnizität und Migration*, p. 165, for this aspect).

⁷⁵ Ha, *Ethnizität und Migration*, pp. 166-67: '[...] können durch den "Mißbrauch" des rassistischen Begriffs auch seine rassistischen Konnotationen verdrängen und deaktivieren'.

But this historical dimension of performative implies the possibility of deflecting or redirecting the weight of the past, by attempting to capture and redeploy the terms that bear an oppressive signification, as in the adoption of 'Queer' by homosexuals themselves, or in a citation of norms of femininity in drag performances.⁷⁶

The *Kanaken* do exactly that: they cite themselves as partly violent, partly exotic Turks, and thus create a space for their fight for self-determination and power. Their identification with the race struggles in the USA is also related to the ghetto as an exclusive space for *Kanaken*:

Gaarden is knochenbrecher, 'n sperrbezirk, das hier das olle ostufer und dort der reiche westen, und dazwischen reckt sich wie'n langer arm die gablenz-brücke, doch du denkst die vermaledeite brücke is tag wie nacht und ewig hochgeklappt, so is es in gaarden, wo ja prall unzählige kümmel hausen [...].⁷⁷ (Bayram, 18, Breaker; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 39)

The image of the bridge is of particular significance here; it describes the twofold attitude of the *Kanaken* to their exclusion: on the one hand, Turkish immigrants were put into 'ghettos', thus forcefully separated from the rest of the German society and marginalized (they were not allowed to 'bridge gaps' which they are accused of not doing now); on the other hand, they now re-appropriate this space as their own: what was forced upon them they redefine as their own, something that does not belong to anybody else, particularly not to 'pure' Germans who claim cultural hegemony.

In *The Black Album*, the 'ghetto' as a literal space is less prominent. Former immigrants are often mixed with less well-off British people in deprived areas. However, there is no interaction at all between the 'Asian' and the 'white' communities, who spatially form a community. On the contrary, these are the literal places of physical struggle.⁷⁸ In *The Black Album*, religion serves as a fighting and ultimately separating force creating 'intellectual ghettos'. As these young Muslims seem to be on a jihad (both an intellectual and physical fight for the spread of Islam),

⁷⁶ Culler, 'Philosophy and Literature', 503-19 (p. 515).

⁷⁷ 'Gaarden is bone breaker, a prohibited area, right here the damn East bank and over there the rich West, and in between the gablenz-bridge is stretching like a long arm, but you're thinking this damn bridge is raised forever, day and night, it's like that in gaarden where countless kümmel [cumin] live [...]'.
⁷⁸ See *Album*, pp. 89-101.

they deliberately divide themselves off from the allegedly atheist mainstream:⁷⁹ “‘Atheism won’t last,’ Riaz explained. “Without religion society is impossible. And without God people think they can sin with impunity. There’s no morality”” (*Album*, p. 33). For Riaz, Islam serves as a means of protection against the West’s immoral influences. He aims, therefore, to create his and his people’s own mental spaces free from ‘the evil West’ (despite living in the middle of it), and full of religious purity.

In ‘My Son the Fanatic’, Ali, the ‘fanatic’, relates the West’s immoral influences directly to his father Parvez: ‘Parvez knew he was getting drunk, but he couldn’t stop himself. Ali had a horrible look on his face, full of disgust and censure. It was as if he hated his father. [...] He leaned across the table. [...] “You are too implicated by Western civilisation”’ (*Son*, p. 125). The father is, for his son, immorality personified. He is the graspable object, not simply a general notion of the West, Ali can fight against. This makes Ali’s struggle real and personal.

For Zaimoğlu’s *Kanaken*, religion also helps uncover a ‘double consciousness’,⁸⁰ which they increasingly perceive as something positive, but not necessarily in religious terms: it is the result of living with many cultures, which are not exclusively Turkish and German, but also include rural and urban cultures. In contrast to some of Kureishi’s characters, Zaimoğlu’s *Kanaken* move away from a self-perception as ‘feminized’ ‘new Jews’ (*Album*, p. 201),⁸¹ the new demonized outsiders, and seem to have gained a strong self-awareness: ‘Und die sagen: du bist auf’m damm, mann, wie willst du, daß wir dich nennen? Und du sagst: ich bin, der ich bin!’⁸² (Hasan, 13, Streuner und Schüler [tramp and pupil]; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 92). Despite the group identity as *Kanaken*, most of them create their personal identity: belonging to a group is important but not the ultimate aim. In contrast, Kureishi’s young Muslims create a culture of community: the anti-individualistic group is needed for their religious rediscovery – as an effective means of opposition to the decadent and individualist West.

⁷⁹ See Kureishi’s comment in Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi*, p. 203: ‘One couldn’t have predicted in the sixties that in the nineties young people who were born and brought up here would be asserting their Muslim identity in quite such a right-wing way. Who would have thought such an odd thing could happen? ... the young are less likely to take any shit’.

⁸⁰ Gilroy (with reference to W.E.B. Du Bois), *The Black Atlantic*, p. 1.

⁸¹ Cf. Kureishi’s short story ‘We’re Not Jews’, in *Love in a Blue Time* (see *Son*, above), pp. 41–51. In this story, one of the characters, a mother married to a South Asian ‘immigrant’, uses the sentence ‘We’re not Jews.’ as a defence against a racist attack against her son and herself on a bus (p. 45).

⁸² ‘And they say; you’re alright, man, how do you want to be called? And you say: I am who I am’.

However, the search for belonging via religion is often connected to emotional struggle and personal doubt; it is not a 'straight path' that automatically leads to fulfilment.⁸³ Shahid in *The Black Album*, who did not receive any religious input at home, has serious doubts when he is away from his religious friends:

Shahid felt he had passed the point when he could question Riaz about the fundamentals. Shahid frequently fell into anxiety about his lack of faith. Observing the mosque, in which all he saw were solid, material things, and looking along the line of brothers' faces upon which spirituality was taking place, he felt a failure. But he was afraid that enquiry would expose him to some sort of suspicion. He could at least discuss the doubts with Hat, who said, not to worry, let it happen. And when Shahid did relax he grasped that faith, like love or creativity, could not be willed. This was an adventure in knowing. He had to follow the prescriptions and be patient. Understanding would surely follow; he would be blessed. (*Album*, p. 96)

Previously, Shahid was surprised by 'the religious enthusiasm of the younger generation, and its links to strong political feeling' when visiting family in Karachi (*Album*, p. 91). This feeling of surprise is now replaced by 'anxiety' and a sense of 'failure'. In this sense, his education at home was Western (secular), and this experience is released when interacting with Riaz and his new friends. These doubts, which can be seen as an opportunity to express his individuality, are based on Western influences such as his education, his parents' more secular attitude to life, and primarily his love relationship with Deedee. The more he feels peer pressure ('prescriptions' and 'patience') the more he is afraid of 'suspicion', but simultaneously hopeful of help which will result in 'understanding' and 'pure belief'. The question remains, however, whether faith can be acquired, and whether being part of a group is essential in this learning process.

In 'My Son the Fanatic', Ali is finding his path to Islam entirely on his own, and only seems to be part of a virtual group, the 'millions of others [... who] will gladly give [their] lives for the cause' (*Son*, p. 126). He is, according to Kureishi, 'at

⁸³ In the first sura of the Qur'an, the *fātiha* ('opening'), we read: 'Guide Thou us on the straight path, □ The path of those to whom Thou hast been gracious; - with □ whom thou art not angry, and who go not astray' (Q1:5-7). God is described as 'someone to whom people look for help and guidance' in order 'to find their way onto the "Straight path"' (Michael Cook, *The Koran: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 9 and p. 14). See also John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, 3rd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998 [1988]).

war with it [the clash of cultures; F.M.] *internally*, trying to evacuate it, but never succeeding'.⁸⁴ Kureishi shows that his protagonist's struggle is an eternal one as he will never be able to shed his culturally and religiously mixed background and present (the cause of his confusion and struggle). He should simply learn how to come to terms with it instead.

All in all, in *The Black Album*, moral opposition to the West is mainly expressed in religious terms. This is arguably based on the aftermath of imperialism. In *Kanak Sprak*, opposition is described via exclusive physical spaces and the 'impure' German culture lived there. However, both groups form *Imagined Communities* of their own kinds. They are part of an urban rather than a rural culture.

3.2.1.3 The City as Dwelling Place

In both Zaimoğlu's and Kureishi's texts the city plays a significant role as a dwelling place and place of resistance.

The German Turks in *Kanak Sprak* live in Kiel, which is situated in the 'provinz aleman' ('German provinces').⁸⁵ Although some of the *Kanaken* refer to themselves as 'big city-anatolier' ('big city Anatolians'),⁸⁶ it is the local affiliation with this northern German city that serves as an alternative to a political nation, which is clearly expressed in the use of the local dialect.⁸⁷ It seems to be easier for the *Kanaken* to gain acceptance in and to belong to a smaller unit than to Germany as a whole: 'Wir sind wüchsige aus gaarden'⁸⁸ (Bayram, 18, Breaker; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 39), the '*Kanaken*-ghetto' within the city of Kiel which is marked by struggle.

Kureishi's novel is set in London where belonging is also an issue. Bart Moore-Gilbert points out that 'the modern inner city is an easier "England" to identify with for diasporic populations than rural, industrial and suburban "Englands"'.⁸⁹ Initially, belonging seems easy for Shahid: 'In London, if you found the right place, you could consider yourself a citizen the moment you went to the

⁸⁴ Hanif Kureishi, 'Sex and Secularity: Introduction to *Collected Screenplays One*' (2002), in *The Word and the Bomb* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), pp. 81-87 (p. 86; my emphasis).

⁸⁵ Zaimoğlu, 'sıcarım süppkültütünüze, züppeler!', pp. 86-95 (p. 89).

⁸⁶ Zaimoğlu, 'KümmelContra', pp. 174-81 (p. 174).

⁸⁷ See Yıldız, 'Critically "*Kanak*"', pp. 319-40 (p. 326).

⁸⁸ 'We've grown up in gaarden'.

⁸⁹ Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, p. 10.

same local shop twice' (*Album*, p. 193). As a metropolitan place, London seems to welcome everybody. Yet in order to make it a home, other factors (such as finding a group of like-minded people) need to come in.

It appears, therefore, that in both texts the young Muslims' culture is an urban culture. The *Kanaken* and Kureishi's young British Muslims clearly do what Ha refers to as 'the imaginative *reconstruction* of cultural spaces, the *relocalization* of late-modern urbanity, and the *reterritorialization* of urban landscapes'.⁹⁰ One approach to these processes is the conscious living of gang culture. Gangs or posses are a significant aspect in the process of regaining masculinity for Zaimoğlu's and Kureishi's male protagonists. Groups give a sense of belonging, strength within the group as well as against others, and security in a hostile environment.

Die jungs streunen durch die stadt, sie rotten sich zusammen, weil sie große teile des tages einsam sind. Im rudel findet man früher oder später zu einem kodex, in der gang erhält man die feuertaufe, und mit dem neugewonnenen sinn im leib gehen sie in kleinen scharen auf die suche. Das geld ist eine sorge, das outfit nicht minder. [...] Sie sind das wahre lumpenproletariat [...]. Sie sind menschenmüll, eine verschwendung in den straßen der metropolen, sie haben das spiel verloren, weil die karten gezinkt sind, die man ihnen in die hand drückt. Deshalb sind sie kanaken, deshalb bin ich ein kanake, deshalb bist du ein kanake. Wir sind bastarde, freund [...].⁹¹ (Memet, 29, Dichter [poet]; *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 109-10)

The city encourages the formation of groups as a means of belonging. Memet describes a strange mix of attachment and detachment with his *Kanaken*: on the one hand, he describes them in an anthropological way, yet, on the other, he includes himself in this 'wir' ('we'). Yet Memet emphasizes that the gang becomes a unifying device against the mainstream and thus represent a conscious choice to belong.

⁹⁰ Ha, *Ethnizität und Migration*, p. 164; original emphasis: 'die imaginative *Rekonstruktion* kultureller Räume, die *Relokalisierung* spätmoderner Urbanität und die *Reterritorialisierung* städtischer Landschaften'.

⁹¹ 'The guys are roaming the city, they gang up because they are lonely for most of the day. Among the pack, they sooner or later find a codex, in the gang you receive the baptism of fire, and with the reclaimed sense in their bodies they go hunting in small posses. Money is one concern, the outfit not less. [...] They are the true lumpenproletariat [...]. They are human waste, wastage in the streets of the metropolis, they have lost the game because the cards that have been thrust into their hands have been marked. That's why they are *kanaken*, that's why I am a *kanake*, that's why you are a *kanake*. We are bastards, friend [...]'.

Gangs are part of a masculine world, a 'gangsta culture'.⁹² As Zaimoğlu indicates in his preface: 'Am öffentlichen Leben in den Szenen der Kanaken-Ghettos nimmt hauptsächlich der Mann teil, der Frau dagegen wird bedeutet, sie habe sich aus der männlichen Welt herauszuhalten.'⁹³ Male exclusivity is expressed in the formation of gender-specific groups and at the expense of women. Women, particularly Western women, yet also prostitutes, are regarded as 'fair game', as an exchangeable trophy,⁹⁴ and are only passively part of the men's activities.⁹⁵ This seems to represent a return to gender stereotypes and the idea that (physical) fighting is exclusively masculine behaviour,⁹⁶ an attitude which is also expressed in the constant reference to drugs, crime, and violence: gangs operate in an 'Unterwelt' ('underworld') (*Kanak Sprak*, p. 100) where the struggle between power and law is being conducted.⁹⁷ Many of the *Kanaken* are deliberately going against any law as an expression of their identity and of a fight against 'klein-ali-träume' ('little ali dreams') (*Kanak Sprak*, p. 74), the dream of 'making it in Germany' (which automatically means observing the law). However, this form of assimilation would mean submitting to the German mainstream – and ultimately becoming feminized: 'Die erste devise heißt: der hahn kräht nur nach dem starken'⁹⁸ (Cem, 25, Zuhälter [pimp]; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 54). Living in the city demands the survival of the fittest which is personified by the '*Kanakster*' (a combination of '*Kanake*' and 'gangster') 'as a new and effective strategy of survival'.⁹⁹ However, bell hooks points out that

⁹² See hooks, *We Real Cool*, pp. 15-32.

⁹³ Zaimoğlu, preface 'Kanak Sprak', in *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 9-18 (p. 15): 'It is mainly men who take part in the public life in the scenes of the *Kanaken*-ghettos, the woman, however, is indicated that she is to keep out of the male world'.

⁹⁴ Barbara Mennel, 'Bruce Lee in Kreuzberg and Scarface in Altona: Transnational Auteurism and Ghetto-centrism in Thomas Arslan's *Brothers and Sisters* and Fatih Akin's *Short Sharp Shock*', in *Postwall Cinema*, ed. by Eric Rentschler (= Special Issue, *New German Critique*, no. 87 (Fall 2002), 133-56 (p. 150).

⁹⁵ See the way Cem, 25, Zuhälter [pimp] talks about 'his' prostitutes in *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 49-54. See also the written conversations the characters Serdar (on holiday in Turkey) and Hakan (in Germany) have in Zaimoğlu's epistolary novel *Liebesmale, scharlachrot* [*Love bites, Scarlet*] (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2002 [2000]). They tend to speak about women in a disparaging way. The number of their trophies (the number of the (German) women they have been able to seduce) is proof of their masculinity.

⁹⁶ The *Kanakas* in Zaimoğlu's *Koppstoff* will prove this idea wrong.

⁹⁷ Cf. Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1998 [1978]), p. 87 (originally published as *La Volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976)).

⁹⁸ 'The first motto is: we only care about the strong one'.

⁹⁹ Hestermann, 'The German-Turkish Diaspora and Multicultural German Identity', pp. 329-73 (p. 364).

this role is less of a choice than is usually thought, but rather a product of white male patriarchy: 'Mass media [...] teaches young black males that the patriarchal man is a predator, that only the strong and the violent survive.'¹⁰⁰ The question remains whether the *Kanaken* follow this media image subconsciously or consciously recognize that only through a metaphorical and physical fight can they become visible.

In *The Black Album*, the group around Riaz is also partly transgressing civil law whilst upholding their religious law: they are fighting against what they regard as Western immorality and injustice. Women are included in activities such as protecting a Bangladeshi family in a housing estate against racial attacks. However, these stereotypically male actions seem to de-gender or even masculinize them: they are not recognized as women but purely as Muslims, and thus become part of the struggle.

Chad squatted back down on his haunches with his armoury around him, as far from Nina and Sadiq as possible. The pair volunteered for the maximum duty. Forbidden to kiss or touch, they liked to fight: Sadiq had pinched her and now Nina was poised for the chance to pinch him back, regarding Chad and Shahid suspiciously, as if they were teachers. Chad didn't like the sisters accompanying them, though it was they, being devoted to the cause, who insisted; it was they, encouraged by Riaz, who had to make excuses to their parents. (*Album*, p. 126)

The relationship between the men and the women here is based on struggle, which is a familiar, secure field of communication. The women are regarded as 'sisters', a role which is non-sexual and thus – again – safe. This role is encouraged by their leader Riaz: it appears that only by being an asexual companion can the women achieve respect within the group. They are not allowed to be themselves (women), which, however, results in their desire to prove their strength by acting like men – their only opportunity to gain a place within the masculine world of the city.

All these creations of literal as well as metaphorical spaces lead to a recognition of exclusivity as a means of deliberate opposition to the mainstream, and a perception as well as questioning of authenticity regarding what a Muslim, a *Kanake*, or British or German person is.

¹⁰⁰ hooks, *We Real Cool*, p. 204.

3.2.2 Exclusivity and Authenticity

The formation of groups inevitably leads to an exclusive self-understanding. It also tackles false notions of authenticity prescribed by the mainstream: 'Was deutsch ist, bestimmen wir.'¹⁰¹ The *Kanaken* make clear that they are part of Germany, but not in the sense of being 'assimilated': they also define themselves by rejecting those they call '*Lieb-Alileins*' ('Nice Little Alis'), '*Alemannen*' and '*Deutschländer*' ('German people'). This urge to find an exclusive space away from assimilation might also be the result of a general exclusion from Turkey where 'Germanized' Turks are often referred to as '*alamanci*' ('*Deutschländer*', a pejorative term for Turkish people who live in Germany and who, in the eyes of their family and friends in Turkey, have 'Germanized' over the years and thus do not belong to Turkey any more).

This self-determination is based on the notion of being put in a certain category by the dominant society. Many *Kanaken* react against this:

Der einheimische hat für'n kümmel ja zwei reservate frei: entweder bist du'n lieb-alilein, 'n recht und billiger bimbo eben [...]. So'n lieb-alilein ist der wahre kanake, weil er sich dem einheimischen zwischen die ollen arschbacken in den kanal dienert, und den kakaoüberzug als ne art identität pflegt. 'n kanake is sowas wie ne rothaut, die man mit bunten glasperlen und feuerwasser bescheißt, und der grient dazu wie'n tourist auf'm schnappschußfoto. Dann gibt's noch'n zweites reservat, in dem der fremdländer den part des verwegenen desperados übernimmt, ein richtiger mannskerl eben, der wie'n blitz aus der hüfte schießt, und sonst auch'n feiner stecher is, und in diesem reservat lümmeln sich die goldkettchen-bimbos und die schneuzerkümmel und machen jagd auf blonde weibchen, weil die krücken brauchen und jede menge stützgeräte, um auf den beinen zu bleiben. In beiden fällen, bruder, wirst du als luschengaul ins tote rennen geschickt [...], und dann steckt man dir mürbe zuckerwürfel ins maul und krault dich herrisch an der mähne.¹⁰² (Ali, 23, Rapper (von 'da crime posse'); *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 31-32)

¹⁰¹ "Was deutsch ist, bestimmen wir": Dokumentation der Talkshow 'III nach neun' (N3) mit Feridun Zaimoglu, Heide Simonis, Wolf Biermann, Norbert Blüm und Harald Junke', *iz3w* (Februar-März 2000), 39: 'we decide what is German'.

¹⁰² 'The native has, well, two spaces reserved for the *kümmel* [cumin]: you either are a nice little ali, a right and proper bimbo [...]. Such a nice little ali is the true *kanake* because he brown-noses the native right between the cheeks of his ass and looks after his own chocolate-covered skin like some sort of identity. A *kanake* is something like a redskin who is being cheated with colourful glass beads and fire-water, and he smirks like a tourist on a snapshot photo. Then there is the second reserve in which the foreigner takes over the part of the reckless desperado, a real bloke, who shoots from the hip like a thunderbolt and is also a fine shagger in other ways, and in this reserve the gold chain bimbos and the moustachiod *kümmel* [cumin] are slouching and are chasing blond bitches because they need crutches

Kanaken reject assimilated Turks, who 'dienern' ('brown-nose') their way into an identity which is based on a 'false consciousness': here, identity is something that one puts on like a piece of clothing that does not fit properly. These Turks also support 'exotic' elements without subverting them (as the 'friendly Turk' or the 'womanizer'). Yet the *Kanaken* think that an 'authentic' identity can only be acquired, or even earned, and it is based on a conscious and ultimately political decision to fight for it.

Kanaken make their own differentiations within their group, and thus take over the task of labelling and excluding some German Turks.¹⁰³ The rejection of certain types of German Turks is another way of expressing power and opposition to the German mainstream. In turn, this kind of exclusivity gives the *Kanaken* a sense of belonging which is also expressed in their name or 'title'. Ulku, for example, says: 'Ich kann dir man auflisten, was'n kanake echt sein läßt [...]'¹⁰⁴ (Ulku, 28, arbeitslos [unemployed]; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 136). 'Echt' ('authenticity') seems to be based on non-acceptance of anything exclusively German. It is a social and political category. This authenticity is also connected to a codex, a certain kind of behaviour and way of speaking as a separating device. It is possibly connected to religious ideas of 'good behaviour', but certainly to culturally developed notions of honour. Honour is a concept frequently associated with Turkish, or more generally Muslim, people: one's own and one's family's honour, which is often represented by the idea of sexual purity, needs to be protected, if necessary by means of violence. It becomes a defining and separating device re-appropriated by the *Kanaken* as a codex they all have to follow in order to remain part of the gang.

In *The Black Album*, authenticity is primarily expressed in terms of religion (and thus moral purity) and against the Western generalization of 'Pakis'.¹⁰⁵ This label makes the West feel superior and stronger than 'Asian' immigrants. Chad says: "No more Paki. Me a Muslim. We don't apologize for ourselves neither. We are

and an awful lot of support to stay on both feet. In both cases, brother, you are sent into the dead race as a dud horse [...], and then they put dry sugar cubes into your mouth and ruffle your mane imperiously'.

¹⁰³ See Zaimoğlu's labelling in his preface 'Kanak Sprak', in *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 9-18 (pp. 16-17).

¹⁰⁴ 'I can tell you what a makes a *Kanake* real'.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 252, where he analyses the 'power of generalization' of Orientalism.

people who say one important thing – that pleasure and self-absorption isn't everything!' (*Album*, p. 128). Chad's clear self-differentiation from other 'Pakis', who include people of different religious backgrounds, via religion (the 'important thing') reacts against Western practices of labelling. For him, only the label 'Muslim' is acceptable as it directly draws attention to what it stands for: honour and self-restraint. (This idea is also supported by Ali in 'My Son the Fanatic' who condemns his father's enjoyment of alcohol and gambling, of being 'only human' (Parvez in *Son*, p. 124).) Chad simultaneously refers to Islam as an idea that goes beyond nations and is all-embracing.

Overall, in both *Kanak Sprak* and *The Black Album* exclusivity functions as a reaction against the West with its racist and/or unreligious attitudes. These are political attitudes towards people of a different cultural and religious background as well as the rejection of a hedonistic approach to life, a life full of pleasure, not restraint. The texts challenge authenticity in relation to both what Germanness is (*Kanak Sprak*) and what a Muslim (as opposed to the generalizing term 'Paki') is (*The Black Album*). In both cases community and family play a significant role in the negotiation of masculine identity.

3.2.3 Community and Family

The notion of belonging is also expressed through masculine struggle¹⁰⁶ – for oneself as well as for other, weaker people of the same religion. This struggle is directed against the 'centre' that seemingly does not know poverty and violence. Yet the *Kanaken* and British Muslims make the 'centre' aware of the problems arising out of poverty and violence, of the inequality between 'centre' and 'margin'. This kind of struggle also serves as a way to define and strengthen their sense of belonging to the community of *Kanaken* or British Muslims. Hall emphasizes that

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, pp. 174-75: 'Violence articulates blackness to a distinct mode of lived masculinity, but it is also a factor in what distinguishes blacks from whites.' (Gilroy refers to Richard Wright (in e.g. *The Outsider*) and the ideology of family here).

the term 'community', in this context, also reflects certain shared self-understandings by people who are in it: a strong sense of group identity; the binding ties of common language, religious practices, history, social customs and customary types of relationship, especially those maintained in familial and domestic setting.¹⁰⁷

In this sense, fighting is – again – strongly associated with having a common attitude towards life and a goal to fight for what they think is the 'right' way of living, with honour and respect, and the idea of following a codex: these strong values serve as a way to stay 'alive' and 'clean', and ultimately to keep the community strong. As Ali in *Kanak Sprak* explains:

und ich nahm gleich auch den guten kodex an, der da heißt: wirf dein leben nicht weg, wenn du echt bronx sein willst, pfoten weg von dem, was dich und die gemeinde schwächt, no drugs, no crime, und stärke und respekt vor schwestern und brüdern, und schutz nur in der gemeinschaft derer, die sich clean halten aus purer überzeugung.¹⁰⁸ (Ali, 23, Rapper (von 'da crime posse'); *Kanak Sprak*, p. 28)

Ultimately, or even paradoxically, the groups' restlessness, their fight, provides stability, as they are creating something of their own, namely a counter-movement to the Western mainstream: 'wir schwimmen nicht mit dem strom, wir machen nen eigenen strikten strom, wo jeder'n fluß is und aufhört 'n gottverschissenes rinnsal zu sein'¹⁰⁹ (Bayram, 18, Breaker; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 42). It is this unifying idea of being and fighting together which determines their self-definition as 'different' young men.

Struggle also stands for fighting for the bigger 'Nation of Islam' as a substitute 'family':

'We're not blasted Christian,' Riaz replied with considerable aggression for him, though the effect was rather undermined by the fact that he was, as usual, carrying his briefcase. 'We don't turn the other cheek. We will fight

¹⁰⁷ Stuart Hall, *The Multicultural Question*, Pavis Papers in Social and Cultural Research, 4 (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2001), p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ 'and i immediately adopted the good codex which is: don't through away your life if you want to be real bronx, hands off of what weakens you and the community, no drugs, no crime, and power and respect for sisters and brothers, and protection within the community only for those who keep themselves clean out of true conviction'.

¹⁰⁹ 'We're not going with the flow, we're making our own strict flow, where everybody is a torrent and stops being a goddamn trickle'.

for our people who are being tortured in Palestine, Afghanistan, Kashmir! War has been declared against us. But we are armed.' (*Album*, p. 82)

Islam is used as a tool to express opposition to the West which here is symbolized by Christianity as a Western religion that Riaz regards as a passive religion. It is once again noticeable that dichotomies are part of Riaz's thinking: they seem to serve conveniently as support for his fight, his jihad. This thinking suggests that the West is needed as a form of identification, an identification through opposition, and that it is questionable whether Riaz's Muslim identity can be formed from within himself and his religion.

The idea of fight needs to be examined in relation to generational issues since the struggle is thought to have been neglected by the older generation: 'aber da draußen tobt ne fehde, die alten sind ohne saft, das is jetzt ne zeit nach den alten' (Büyük Ibo, 18, Packer; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 47).¹¹⁰ Old family structures do not seem to work any more. Despite frequent disappointments when trying to be accepted in the 'mother country', the first generation of male migrants mainly aimed at integrating into, or even assimilating to, the 'host' society (thus losing power and, ultimately, their masculinity, which was established in their previous patriarchal societies, in an equally patriarchal but domineering Western society). However, Zaimoğlu's German Turkish men increasingly move away from this idea and gain renewed self-awareness: to be different is regarded as something positive and a way of finding an identity which is based on their own ideas of how they should be (and not what the 'colonial' power tells them to be). Through their physical as well as personal struggle, they seem to (re-)gain a different kind of power: a power based on pride.

In terms of religion, many of Kureishi's Muslims rediscover their religious roots as a way of finding an alternative 'family':

At home Papa liked to say, when asked about his faith, 'Yes, I have a belief. It's called working until my arse aches!' Shahid and Chili had been taught little about religion. [...]

Now, though, Shahid was afraid his ignorance would place him in no man's land. These days everyone was insisting on their identity, [...] brandishing whichever features they could claim, as if without a tag they couldn't be human. Shahid, too, wanted to belong to his people. But first he had to know

¹¹⁰ 'But out there a feud is raging, the old are without any zest, now is the time after the old ones'.

them, their past and what they hoped for. Fortunately, Hat had been of great help. [...] Then, clearing a space on the floor, he had demonstrated what to do. (*Album*, p. 92)

For the older generation, work frequently substituted for religion because it gave them the hope to do well and to be accepted by the dominant society, and thus to create a new home. (Kureishi also puts this issue at the centre of 'My Son the Fanatic'. Parvez, who 'love[s] England' for the freedom it gives people (*Son*, p. 126) thinks that his son is taking the 'wrong turning' (*Son*, p. 120) by choosing the supposedly backward way of religion (which Parvez regards as his origin) instead of going forwards to progress and prosperity. He wants his son to do better than him – but Ali rejects his father's wishes.) Yet as this endeavour does not seem to have worked, the younger generation has felt the consequences (such as a feeling of in-betweenness, of not having a home). I suggested at the beginning of this chapter that religion (or cultural history in general) can function as a means of creating a sense and space of belonging. Younger Muslims do not seem to have received the security associated with belonging: neither from their parents (who often still regard themselves as belonging to the country they came from) nor from their country of birth. Shahid is, therefore, looking for this security himself. There is a 'philosophical division between Muslim fundamentalism and the Asian immigrant dream'.¹¹¹ Shahid seems to fear losing touch with his origins since they do not lie in his 'home country'. However, what are these origins? Are they – in the case of Kureishi's Muslims – Pakistani or Arab, cultural or religious? This unanswerable question draws attention to the urge to have an identity which comes from within themselves as well as from society, and the need to belong to a group of people defined by themselves. The turn to religion makes clear that the role of teachers is no longer fulfilled by the fathers, who seem to become obsolete, but by generational equals. The latter also recruit other Muslims to ensure the continuity of their religious endeavours.¹¹² They also teach the meaning of Islam and thus contribute to the creation and preservation of their own spaces of belonging.

¹¹¹ Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi*, p. 158.

¹¹² Cf. Sardar, *Desperately Seeking Paradise*. Throughout his book, Sardar describes how he was recruited by various Muslim organizations and how he later recruited new members himself.

The central theme of Kureishi's short story 'My Son the Fanatic' is the controversy between father and son regarding the son's rediscovery of Islam as a form of purity – and ultimately personal satisfaction and happiness in a culturally and religiously hostile world. The story is about Parvez and his dream of 'making it' in England and, consequently, his will to integrate rather than about Ali who is fighting against the 'persecution' of 'his people' (Muslims) (*Son*, pp. 126). Ali substitutes the Muslim community for his 'real' family since his father does not seem to be able to provide an emotional home for him any longer. Thus, the notion of having lost a 'home' is dealt with differently by the younger generation than by the older one: young people seem to be looking for something 'higher'. This could be a possible form of rebellion against their fathers' bowing to Western domination (their humiliation), yet it is primarily regarded as something that distinguishes them from the 'rest' and is a way of finding stability in a faith shared with like-minded people.

But the religious aspect is different for Zaimoğlu's young German Turks. In contrast to British immigrant Muslims who turned to work, their parents often regarded religion as a means to find stability and warmth in an alien and cold Germany:

Ich sehe sie [die Alten] niederknien vor einem gott, der immerfort in der wüste sprach. Ich weiß, daß sie diesen ihren gott bitter nötig haben, sonst würden sie zerbröckeln wie starre salzsäulen, die man einfach umwirft. Sie haben, getäuscht und abermals getäuscht, eine fremde, aber komischerweise naheliegende version verdient. Man soll sie in ruhe lassen. Die jungen dagegen fuchtelten mit zu langen gliedern, sie wissen nicht wohin mit der überschüssigen energie [...]. Dabei sind wir bloß besessen von der idee, besser zu sein als der eingeborene, der uns sehr früh einbläut, daß nur besonders tüchtige oder besonders intelligente kanaken die zielgerade erreichen.¹¹³ (Memet, 29, Dichter [poet]; *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 112-13)

Memet refers to the *Kanaken*'s fathers' God, not their God here, thus establishing a distance to the previous generation. Kadir even speaks of a 'fehlerhafte[] orthodoxie'

¹¹³ 'I see them [the old] kneeling down before a god who evermore spoke in the desert. I know that they bitterly need this god otherwise they would crumble like stiff pillars of salt that are simply knocked over. They have, disappointed and once again disappointed, deserved an alien yet funnily obvious version. They should be left alone. The young, in contrast, are brandishing limbs which are too long, they don't know where to with this excess energy [...]. But we are only obsessed by the idea of being better than the native who, really early, drills into us that only extremely efficient or extremely intelligent *kanaken* can reach the finishing straight'.

(‘flawed orthodoxy’) by which he means the nostalgia for a previous, more stable life, which can also be expressed in terms of religion: ‘sie warten auf das mystische zeichen, das ihnen anzeigt, ihre zelte abzubrechen und heimzukehren. Auch dann würden sie, diese alten männer, ein gottseibiuns murmeln [...]’¹¹⁴ (Kadir, 32, Soziologe [sociologist]; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 103). For the *Kanaken*, return is not an option; the question is also ‘where to’, since they – at least by birth – belong to Germany. In this sense, their parent’s religion, Islam, cannot be of help, as it carries a sense of nostalgia and of something better, which the *Kanaken* no longer believe in. They are partly disillusioned, partly extremely realistic about their ‘different’ position in Germany, and turn this difference as identity into their reality.¹¹⁵

The *Kanaken* as young radicals want to overcome their parent’s passivity. Ha describes this issue as follows:

Ohne ein starkes männliches Vorbild aufgewachsen, das mit allen Eigenschaften patriarchalischer Gewalt ausgestattet ist, müssen die männlichen Jugendlichen, um sich ihrer *Maskulinität* zu vergewissern, auf dem einzigen Terrain, das ihnen in ihrer gesellschaftlichen Stellung offen steht, sich als besonders ‘männlich’ darstellen.¹¹⁶

As I have shown, in *Kanak Sprak* masculinity is performed primarily through fight, an idea the older generation do not share. Many *Kanaken* regard violence as the fundamental expression of manliness. In contrast to their fathers, the sons seem to feel an urge to prove their stereotypical manliness in the form of physical strength.

¹¹⁴ ‘they are waiting for a mystical sign which tells them to pull up their stakes and go home. But even then they, the old men, would mumble a godbewithus [...]’.

¹¹⁵ A discussion of dual citizenship would go beyond the scope of this chapter. However, this issue is of greater significance for the post-*Gastarbeiter* generations as they have to face the fact that they cannot easily return to their ‘home country’. This is a dream their parents often pursued, but never put into practice. They never consciously asked themselves whether they would stay in Germany permanently and hence tended to be tied to their Turkish citizenship. Their children need to deal with the question of nationality and citizenship more thoroughly in the light of the ongoing debates surrounding these issues in German migration politics, particularly since the change of legislation in late 1999, which made dual citizenship more accessible. For more information, see Helicke, ‘Turks in Germany’, pp. 175–191.

¹¹⁶ Ha, *Ethnizität und Migration*, p. 48; original emphasis: ‘Having grown up without a strong male role model that is equipped with every characteristic of patriarchal violence, male adolescents have to, in order to assure themselves of their *masculinity*, portray themselves as particularly “manly” in the only terrain that is open to them within their position in society’.

The question remains whether the return to religion can be regarded as a form of (conservative) rebellion.¹¹⁷ It clearly provides a structure (also demonstrated by regular practices that pull the group together or the mode of dress) in a life that is determined by restlessness. This is a feeling that the older generation did not have in the same way: they always knew exactly where their roots were. However, religion – in these young Muslims' definition – also deliberately causes unrest (such as the burning of *The Satanic Verses*) and then becomes a means of active rebellion. Religion does not have to be a sign of passive nostalgia, but can be turned into active nostalgia, the struggle for a – in some young Muslims' definition – better life without negative Western influences.

Can these newly defined and created spaces – literally (in 'ghettos') and metaphorically (in the form of male exclusivity or religion) – serve as a means of effective resistance to the mainstream? Michel Foucault draws attention to resistance that produces 'cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds.'¹¹⁸ Both Zaimoğlu's *Kanaken* and Kureishi's *British Muslims* do exactly that and thereby differentiate themselves from the mainstream. These processes appear as performative acts, as deliberate constructions of masculinity.

3.3 Masculinity as Performance

As previously described, masculinity, or rather the pressure to perform as men, is primarily expressed in clearly defined spaces where authority can be undermined and thus power be regained and exercised.¹¹⁹ In these spaces, masculinity is also tied to

¹¹⁷ Cf. Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, p. 92: 'Kureishi remains fascinated by the irony of the reversal of the traditional parent-versus-rebellious-second-generation paradigm'.

¹¹⁸ Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 96.

¹¹⁹ Zaimoğlu himself is aware of the fact that he performs the role of the subverting writer. See Feridun Zaimoğlu, 'Eure Coolness ist Gigaout: Eine Gespräch mit Jutta Winkelmann', in *Kanaksta: Von deutschen und anderen Ausländern*, ed. by Joachim Lottmann (Berlin: Quadriga, 1999), pp. 23-32 (p. 28): 'Ich bin ein Sonderfall, auch unter den Kanakstern. Ich bin einer, der sich das alles

particular acts or rituals. As Judith Butler points out, 'gender [...] is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through stylised repetition of acts'; it 'is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo'.¹²⁰ Most of this chapter's young Muslims 'stage' their identities; 'the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts'.¹²¹ However, 'performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act", but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names.'¹²² Particularly the *Kanaken* apply deliberate acts when emphasizing their masculinity: these acts are based on violence, sexual seduction, and verbal fight. The British Muslims in Kureishi's novel, in contrast, express their masculinity in terms of religion and its rituals that provide a sense of unity and thus stability.

The idea of acting also holds true for Zaimoğlu's representation of his young German Turks in the form of 'protocols'. Cheesman emphasizes that 'readers should bear in mind that what apparently claims to be a protocol of spontaneous speech may perhaps in part be just that, though we will never know; far more importantly, it is a script for dramatic performance'.¹²³ But this 'dramatic performance' has an empowering effect: as Ha says, 'through the act of speaking, the marginalized try to find their own self, their history, and a place of liberated and liberating articulation' which results in a 'fundamental shift of perspective'.¹²⁴ They increasingly make use

angekuckt hat und der gesagt hat: "Ihr Scheißer, ihr falschen Propheten da oben! Was ihr könnt, kann ich schon lange! Ihr wollt Macht, ihr demonstriert Macht, da liefere ich euch eine Macht, die anziehender und sexier ist als euer Scheingemurmel." ('I am a special case, even among the *Kanakstern*. I am someone who had a look at all that and then said: "You shitheads, you false prophets up there! Whatever you can do, I have long been able to do! You want power, you demonstrate power, I show you power which is more attractive and sexier than your pretentious mumbling."').

¹²⁰ Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', in *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, ed. by Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 401-17 (p. 402).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 403.

¹²² Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 2.

¹²³ Cheesman, 'Akçam – Zaimoğlu – "Kanak Attak"', 180-195 (p. 185). Similarly, the subtitle of Zaimoğlu's novel *Abschaum* is *Die wahre Geschichte von Ertan Ongun*. Zaimoğlu claims authenticity of Ertan's story. In his 'Nachwort' ('Epilogue'), the writer tells his readers about Ertan after the publication of the book and situates his story in the context of migration, thus emphasizing the fact that Ertan's story is true (pp. 183-84).

¹²⁴ Ha, *Ethnizität und Migration*, p. 165: 'durch den Akt des Redens versuchen die Marginalisierten ihr eigenes Ich, ihre Geschichte und einen Ort des befreiten und befreienden Sprechens zu finden'; 'grundlegende Verschiebung der Perspektive'.

of their 'right to construct themselves, their own identity';¹²⁵ they – as Butler puts it – 'do' their bodies,¹²⁶ and – as previously shown – their speech.

Butler regards (gender) performance 'as a strategy of survival'.¹²⁷ As I have shown, both Zaimoğlu's *Kanaken* and Kureishi's British Muslims negotiate spaces and roles within a group that give them security in a hostile environment. They constantly challenge 'socially established ways of being a man',¹²⁸ and of being a 'foreigner' or *Kanake*:

Ein bastard ist ein bündel aus irrationalismen, er hat eine abseitige mystik, die ihn zutiefst beunruhigt, er sieht zeichen und wunder, wo keine sind, weil er sich stets auf fremden terrain bewegt. Man sagt dem bastard, er fühle sich unwohl, weil zwei seelen bzw. zwei kulturen in ihm wohnen. Das ist eine lüge. [...] Der bastard braucht keine politur, er verpaßt sich schon selbst mehrere schichten lack, damit er nicht auffällt wie ein gescheckter hund. Der kanake ist so etwas wie ein synthetisches produkt, das sich und die fabrik haßt, in dem es gefertigt wurde. [...] er hat den blick für das, was sich hinter den kulissen abspielt. [...] Er ist darauf dressiert, zum kern vorzustößen, deshalb verschmäht er die hülle. Also der kanake ist zugleich ein fundamentalist.¹²⁹ (Memet, 29, Dichter [poet]; *Kanak Sprach*, pp. 110-11)

Memet's attitude implies choice, a play with gaps left behind by socially accepted roles and the reality of being a 'foreigner'.¹³⁰ His use of the term 'bastard' refers to *Kanaken* as in-between subjects and defines a 'marginal masculinity', which can be both a creative and restrictive position.¹³¹ It involves a constant struggle with identity. Yet this kind of identity negotiation creates possibilities for resistance and change.¹³² As 'social outsiders (in response to the significant growth of the Turkish

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 165-66: 'Recht auf Selbstkonstruktion'.

¹²⁶ Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution', pp. 401-17 (p. 404).

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 405.

¹²⁸ Culler, 'Philosophy and Literature', 503-19 (p. 513).

¹²⁹ 'A bastard is a bundle of irrationalisms, he has a remote mysticism which bothers him deeply, he notices signs and wonders where they aren't any because he moves on foreign terrain at all times. The bastard is told he feels unwell because two souls or two cultures respectively are living inside him. This is a lie. [...] The bastard does not need polishing, he's already given himself several layers of paint in order not to stick out like a sore thumb. The *kanake* is something of a synthetic product that hates itself and the factory in which it was manufactured. [...] he has a vision for what is going on behind the façade. [...] He is trained to get to the core of everything, this is why he hates the cover. Well, the *kanake* simultaneously is a fundamentalist'.

¹³⁰ Culler, 'Philosophy and Literature', 503-19 (p. 513).

¹³¹ Mennel, 'Bruce Lee in Kreuzberg and Scarface in Altona', pp. 133-56 (p. 154).

¹³² Culler, 'Philosophy and Literature', 503-19 (p. 514).

middle class)',¹³³ the *Kanaken* react against assimilation. However, there often is an element of living up to exotic images involved in the interaction with the mainstream which can be seen as a different kind of assimilation: 'das gastarbeiterkind macht halt auf kulturkreissymptomatischen ethnoquark [...]: etwas nigger etwas harlem etwas oriental magic.'¹³⁴ This 'pick-and-mix' attitude of the child of the former *Gastarbeiter* is the initial reaction to the problematic of defining an identity under the pressure of the mainstream. It is only after a process of gaining self-awareness that they become *Kanaken*. In whatever way the *Kanaken* or British Muslims choose to represent themselves, they prove that their 'reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed.'¹³⁵ This performance aspect is emphasized by two notions that are of particular significance for the identity of Kureishi's British Muslims and Zaimoğlu's German Turks: firstly, religion as a performative act, and, secondly, sexuality, particularly in the 'Oriental's' relationship to Western women and men.

3.3.1 Religion as Performance

Religion serves as *the* means of self-definition in *The Black Album*. This process takes place via the formation of male-dominated groups: it becomes a way of finding security and of expressing manliness – and Islam appears as a male religion with a focus on (violent) masculinity. Ranasinha points out that the male characters in Kureishi's novel have no 'strong sense of self',¹³⁶ which they seem to want to strengthen by the outer frame given by rituals and regular practices. Even Riaz' talks at the mosque are deliberately delivered in front of and for an audience, partly to strengthen his self-esteem:

¹³³ Cheesman, 'Akşam – Zaimoğlu – "Kanak Attak"', 180-195 (p. 184).

¹³⁴ Zaimoğlu, 'KümmelContra', pp. 174-81 (p. 175): 'the child of the *gastarbeiter* turns on the ethno-stuff symptomatic of certain cultural circles [...]: a bit of nigger a bit of harlem a bit of oriental magic'.

¹³⁵ Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution', pp. 401-17 (p. 411); Butler refers to 'gender reality' here, but, as previously shown, for Zaimoğlu's and Kureishi's characters this reality includes more than gender negotiation.

¹³⁶ Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, p. 18.

Sitting barefoot and cross-legged on a low podium in grey salwar, with a bowl of flowers in front of him, Riaz didn't use notes and he never hesitated. The momentum of his conviction made him fluent, amusing, passionately coruscating. He appeared more comfortable addressing a crowd than being with one person (*Album*, pp. 80-81)

The leader and his group seem to be needed for an effective religion: on the one hand, the leader would not be able to assert his position without the group, on the other, the group needs the leader as a role-model for practising its religion. This relationship is also demonstrated by performative acts that support both the group and, through it, the religion. For example, the symbolic act of praying before fighting (*Album*, p. 91) is aimed at strengthening the group and its belief in a successful fight. One could argue that this is part of any religion, but the celebration of the *umma* is of particular significance in Islam. It is also confirmed by the role of teachers, or imams, who pass on knowledge to the community by, for example, lecturing, a task Riaz clearly enjoys.¹³⁷

A further notion is purity as a form of differentiation from the 'unclean' West they are fighting against. Purity also means less play with identity as a vehicle for a clear-cut definition as Muslim. In this context, Kureishi says about his characters: 'If you are a Muslim, you can't play with your identity in that way [dressing up and playing with gender boundaries; F.M.J].'¹³⁸ Purity is also expressed through rituals, for example the ritual washing before prayer, regulations in the preparation of food, or sexual abstinence. These are outer signifiers that serve as signs for inner cleanliness in opposition to the 'decadent' West.

The notion of purity is also significant for the development of the story 'My Son the Fanatic'. Whilst finding his way back to religion, Ali tries to reach this state of spiritual purity by dressing modestly, getting rid of excessive 'stuff' in his room, and structuring his days (and life) more strictly. However, he regards Parvez, his father, who pursues a Western lifestyle, as 'impure' which he demonstrates by the way he speaks to him and his choice of vocabulary: 'Ali sounded as if he'd swallowed someone else's voice' (*Son*, p. 126). This clash between father and son,

¹³⁷ For an analysis of the importance of the community of believers as celebrated on the hajj and of the role of teachers in Islam, see Chapter 2, particularly Section 2.1.2.

¹³⁸ Kureishi qtd. in Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi*, p. 140.

'impure' West and 'pure' belief is what creates the tension in Kureishi's texts that deal with Islamic 'fundamentalism'.

Zaimoğlu's *Kanaken* only refer to religion when it serves as one, among many, means of opposition to the *alemannen*: 'Ich bin'n freier, und knecht nur vor gott, dem herrn, und sonst keener blondsau was schuldig',¹³⁹ (Hakan, 22, Kfz-Geselle [mechanic]; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 86). It becomes clear that Islam is only part of the process of self-identification where 'certain religious attitudes and rituals are re-appropriated completely'.¹⁴⁰ Generally having reservations about 'halbmondfreaks' (extremely religious people fighting for Islam which is symbolized by the crescent),¹⁴¹ they use Islam as a vehicle of expressing difference rather than belonging. (For Kureishi's character Riaz religion denotes belonging to the group of radical Muslims, yet difference to non-Muslims.) The generation of Zaimoğlu's *Kanaken* thus largely perceive religion as something cultural (often in contrast to their parents who discovered religion as a form of stability in Germany).

Zaimoğlu presents his readers with one religious interlocutor: 'Yücel, 22, Islamist' (*Kanak Sprak*, pp. 137-41) voices a clearly religious view on his life in a non-Muslim and therefore 'unholy' environment. He considers himself fighting a war against the 'unbelievers', particularly in relation to the sexual behaviour of men and women, and is proud to be seen as a 'fundamentalist'. However, he merely speaks out angrily and does not act according to his religious conviction ('Ich, der ich mich seinem [Gottes] wort ergeben' ('Me who is devoted to his [God's] word'); *Kanak Sprak*, p. 141), which, according to what some non-religious or culturally religious *Kanaken* declare in their statements, is regarded as a failure as a radical, that is, active *Kanake*.

Islam partly makes the *Kanaken* Turkish (in cultural as well as racial terms), whereas Islam makes Kureishi's consciously Muslim characters Muslims in entirety

¹³⁹ 'I'm a free person and a servant only before god, the lord, and i don't owe anything to any blond sod'.

¹⁴⁰ Mayer and Terkessidis, 'Retuschierte Bilder', pp. 7-23 (p.11): 'vollkommen neue Aneignung bestimmter religiöser Vorstellungen und Riten'.

¹⁴¹ Zaimoglu, 'KümmelContra', pp. 174-81 (p. 179).

religious terms.¹⁴² Both Zaimoğlu's *Kanaken* and Kureishi's young Muslims express the religious side of their identities in their attitudes towards sexuality.

3.3.2 Sexuality as Performance

In both *Kanak Sprak* and *The Black Album* there is a strong connection between race and masculinity in terms of sexuality. This relates back to a long tradition of Orientalist discourse. As Kabbani points out, 'the European was led into the East by sexuality, by the embodiment of it in a woman or a young boy.'¹⁴³ 'Orientals' are thus turned into outsiders, but are simultaneously made to play 'a role inside Europe' as a 'weak partner for the West'.¹⁴⁴ However, their performances as young 'foreigners' matches neither the expectations from the West nor from their fathers, who wish to conform to 'Western law' in order to do well whilst keeping a traditional view on family. Their performances play with these expectations instead: 'Sie verzeihen ihren söhnen nicht, daß diese über plastikklosschüsseln gebeugt oder unter stromzählern masturbieren, sie lieben ihre söhne als zeuger von dicken enkeln'¹⁴⁵ (Kadir, 32, Soziologe [sociologist]; *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 100-01). The younger generation increasingly turns to Western lifestyles, also in terms of acting out their sexuality. Generational issues become crucial in this context. Their fathers also perform a role: they perceive themselves as protectors of their tradition (including their religion), and expect their sons to follow them.¹⁴⁶ An element of control determines, therefore, their relationship,¹⁴⁷ but it also brings the fathers'

¹⁴² Ranasinha also stresses this aspect in *Hanif Kureishi*, p. 69: 'Butler's concept contrasts with Kureishi's representations of the conscious performance of ethnicity, wherein a notion of a residual sense of the self behind the performance, however elusive, remains'.

¹⁴³ Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 67.

¹⁴⁴ See Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 70-71 and p. 208.

¹⁴⁵ 'They don't forgive their sons that they bend over plastic toilet bowls or masturbate underneath electricity meters, they love their sons as fathers of chubby grandkids'.

¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, mothers are hardly mentioned in the texts discussed here. It seems that the dispute between the generations is an entirely masculine concern. The exclusion of women, or, as described previously, their reduction to certain roles, is possibly a sign of their oppression; they are not taken seriously, and their obedience is simply taken for granted. (Chapter 4, however, puts women's self-perception in texts written by both men and women at the centre.) It is only in later texts primarily by Zaimoğlu (and this is a particularly recent phenomenon to be discussed briefly in the conclusion to this thesis) that women are depicted and celebrated as the heroines of the *Gastarbeiter*-generation.

¹⁴⁷ See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 173.

repression of (here sexual) pleasure to the fore.¹⁴⁸ Zaimoğlu's young German Turks have an opposite view on sexuality.¹⁴⁹

The *Kanaken* reclaim the pleasure their fathers supposedly deny themselves. It simultaneously becomes an element of masculine identification: they define their status according to the (white) women they have access to, which results in an opposition to German men who are, allegedly, sexually less successful. hooks notes that 'sex becomes the ultimate playing field, where the quest for freedom can be pursued in a world that denies black males access to other form of liberating power.' It is one way to 'gain visibility'.¹⁵⁰ In this process, they play with notions of exoticism: the West often pictures itself as non-sexist by portraying Muslims as sexist (usually exemplified by the bad treatment of women); however, the young Muslims here use their 'exotic' features to seduce women and to be more successful than Western men. I regard this as a subtle subversion process: they know exactly why they are supporting the racist stereotype of the 'exotic lover'.

Erst mal isses in der branche gold wert, wenn du als besorger mit'm spezi-bonus kommst [...]. Du bist nur ne fleischpartie, 'n äffchen [...]. Die lady hat dich für ne ganze nacht gekauft, deinen schwanz hat sie gekauft, und der ist mir mein bonus, weil ja'n hautstück fehlt, und ich laß man damit die hölle jodeln. [...] und als sie sich halt über mir die pralle eichel beugt, sagt sie: du mein schöner jude, und als ich ihr sag, ich bin nur'n schlichter kümmel, wird die lady potzblitz ärgerlich und sagt, ich soll die man nicht zerstören, lieber's maul halten und sie man machen lassen [...], wo die lady man annehmen tut, sie würd jetzt'n verbotenes spiel treiben mit nem judengringo [...]. Sonne schicke lady hat eben ne latte von klugbüchern gelesen [...].¹⁵¹ (Ercan, 24, Gigolo; *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 69-71)

¹⁴⁸ See Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, pp. 8-13 and pp. 15-49 ('The Repressive Hypothesis').

¹⁴⁹ Zaimoğlu's *Liebesmale*, *scharlachrot* primarily deals with the young German Turks' enhanced sexuality and the discourse surrounding the relationship between men and women. It also addresses other *Kanaken*-related issues such as the relationship to the German mainstream as well as to the previous generation, crime and drugs, and the role of religion as they are discussed in this chapter.

¹⁵⁰ hooks, *We Real Cool*, p. 74 and p. 80.

¹⁵¹ 'First of all it's great in this industry if you, as shagger, have a special bonus [...]. You're only a piece of meat, a monkey [...]. The lady has bought you for a whole night, she has bought your prick, and this is my bonus because a bit of skin is missing, and i let hell yodel with it. [...] and when she's bent over the big strong bell-end, she says: you my beautiful jew, and when i tell her, i'm just a simple *kümmel* [cumin], the lady, blimey, becomes angry and says, i shouldn't destroy it, rather shut up and leave her to it [...], where the lady assumes she is playing a forbidden game with a jew-gringo [...]. Well, such a posh lady has read a stack of clever books [...]'.

It is significant that these young German Turks openly talk about their sexual adventures, which triggers the question whether, by talking about it, they actually try to explain, or even defend, their promiscuous behaviour.¹⁵² They are playing with taboos¹⁵³ and thus initiate a subversion process in relation to both their parents and the mainstream: it is a rebellion against the restraints of their parent's life as well as a way of reclaiming power by becoming openly masculine. In analogy to Butler's 'girling' of girls,¹⁵⁴ they seem to 'man' themselves as men in exclusively sexual terms by ritualized repetitions of clichés. By emphasizing their sexual manliness, they – again – initiate an 'operation of exclusion': men are judged according to their sexual abilities.¹⁵⁵ As a performance that is geared towards supporting an opposition to German men, it reciprocates power relations: power is measured by the sexual power these men have over women, and, as a result of that, over Western men. The latter's alleged sexual weakness leads to their feminization: Orientalist discourse is re-appropriated as a means of claiming the masculinity of the *Kanaken* back – at the expense of women who serve as a projection for the competition between the *Kanaken* and the *alemannen*: 'n alemanne mimt gern 'n verwegenen flegel im busch, unartig will er sein', but 'der alemanne, bruder, frißt krise, scheißt krise'¹⁵⁶ (Fikret, 25, arbeitslos [unemployed]; *Kanak Sprach*, p. 80 and p. 83). Although this quotation is not directly related to sexuality, it uncovers the weaknesses of the *alemanne* who tries hard to be different, yet without success. It is the aim of the *Kanaken* not to become part of this crisis and to maintain their masculinity by transforming Western men's alleged sexual weakness into their strength.

According to Moore-Gilbert, in *The Black Album*, 'the sexuality of the "Oriental" male [...] also plays ironically (if sometimes uncomfortably) with the figure of the colonized male subject as over-sexed, even a potential rapist of white women, which is an enduring trope in metropolitan literature of empire' by 'stressing the active side

¹⁵² See Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 53.

¹⁵³ See *ibid.*, p. 84.

¹⁵⁴ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 7. See also Bhabha's discussion of subversion processes as the result of the play with multiple identities and hybridity in 'Signs Taken For Wonders', pp. 102-122.

¹⁵⁵ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 11.

¹⁵⁶ 'a german likes miming the reckless lad in the bush, he wants to be naughty', but 'the german, brother, eats crisis, shits crisis'.

of white women for exotic sexual "Others".¹⁵⁷ Deedee Osgood subverts the stereotypical role of the woman who is passive and 'being taken' by putting herself in an active, masculine, and 'taking' position:

Sadiq said: '[... Deedee] Osgood is taking lovers among the Afro-Caribbean and Asian students. Definitely. [...] For political reasons she selects only black or Asian lovers now.'

Tahira adjusted her scarf. 'Our people have always been sexual objects for the whites. No wonder they hate our modesty.' (*Album*, p. 228)

Here, the relationship between race and sexuality is analysed from a different perspective. Sexual pleasure appears as something that is not meant to last. The 'modest' Muslims use this allegedly Western attitude as part of their politics against the 'decadent' West (represented by Deedee) by emphasizing the Orientalist discourse attached to this view and applying it as a vehicle to explain the fundamental differences between 'good Islam' and the 'bad West'. These Muslims almost enjoy seeing themselves as victims of Orientalist perceptions of the Other. (Shahid who is object of Deedee's sexual desire is an exception in this case. He is happily feminized by Deedee who undresses him, and then dresses him in women's clothes and puts make up on him as a form of role and gender play but also as sexual pleasure.¹⁵⁸)

In contrast, Zaimoğlu's *Kanaken* also recognize this kind of Orientalist discourse of sexuality as condescending, but transform it into their own tool of power. They try to 'break the vicious circle of victimization' by trying to be 'faster and harder than the mainstream'.¹⁵⁹ Ha reads this attitude 'as subsequent resistance on behalf of their over-assimilated parents' generation, as belated revenge on this society'.¹⁶⁰ The 'victim' becomes the 'doer', and ultimately an active performer.

¹⁵⁷ Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, pp. 123-24.

¹⁵⁸ Stein, *Black British Literature*, p. 126.

¹⁵⁹ Ha, *Ethnizität und Migration*, p. 48: 'Kreislauf der Viktimisierung [...] durchbrechen'; 'schneller und härter als der Mainstream'.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 49: 'als nachträglicher Widerstand stellvertretend für die überangepaßte Elterngeneration, als verspätete Rache gegenüber dieser Gesellschaft'.

Zaimoğlu's and Kureishi's Muslims demonstrate 'the racialised subject's violent subjugation as body and voice',¹⁶¹ but they reclaim their bodies and voices. Performing a particular role (as 'Islamic fundamentalist' or 'sexualized exotic') seems to enable them to set their mark on the mainstream. Yet the *Kanaken* seem to do more than Kureishi's characters as they are more consciously aware of their roles as 'foreigners' or 'exotic others', and turn the acting of these roles into a tool of power. However, these acts of performance seem to be exhausting, and some of the *Kanaken* develop a desire for peace: 'ich frag mich, wann ich das olle zähnefletschen endlich lassen kann, weil ich doch nicht aus'm tierreich bin, und meine ruhe haben will im menschenreich'¹⁶² (Faruk, 26, arbeitslos [unemployed]; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 77). Faruk seems to aim for a place among the mainstream: he wants to move up from being perceived as an animal to being respected as a human being. (He applies old imperial vocabulary by referring to his animal-likeness, thus suggesting that he – like Kureishi's Muslims – cannot completely escape from the influence of the mainstream. The latter partly initiate his performance as *Kanake*.) They hope to achieve peace by finding and defining who they are – as virtuous Muslims in *The Black Album*, and as deliberately sexualized men in *Kanak Sprak*.

3.4 Defining Muslim Masculinity

The regaining and then proud emphasizing of masculinity – whether by means of religion or sexuality – appear as a way of answering 'a question of knowing who we are'.¹⁶³ As Büyük Ibo in *Kanak Sprak* points out: 'Erste sorge: identität, ne person sein',¹⁶⁴ (Büyük Ibo, 18, Packer; *Kanak Sprak*, p. 44). Yet the majority of Zaimoğlu's and Kureishi's Muslims recognize the fluidity and ever-changing nature of identity: 'There was no fixed self; surely our several selves melted and mutated daily?' (*Album*, p. 274). They negotiate ways of escaping from a fixed identity as 'Oriental':

¹⁶¹ Cheesman, 'Akçam – Zaimoğlu – "Kanak Attak"', 180-195 (p. 189).

¹⁶² 'i ask myself when i can finally stop this damn snarling, because i'm not from the animal world, and i want peace in the human world'.

¹⁶³ Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 78.

¹⁶⁴ 'First concern: identity, being someone'.

they do not accept being 'first an Oriental, second a human being, and last again an Oriental'.¹⁶⁵ Both the *Kanaken* and Kureishi's main protagonist Shahid, who adopts the idea of fluid gender identities from Deedee,¹⁶⁶ uncover constructions and fictions of identity.¹⁶⁷ Ranasinha argues that the discovery of 'identity as performance' is the result of 'experiment[s] with a range of identities, because they are not allowed to be English [or German respectively; F.M.]'.¹⁶⁸

Yet Zaimoğlu makes clear – 'ich will keine parallelwelt zum mainstream'.¹⁶⁹ Ultimately, the allegedly 'authentic' subversion processes of the *Kanaken* should contribute to a new understanding of (Turkish-)Germanness. The *Kanaken* use the gaps in previously imposed identities as 'foreigners' or children of *Gastarbeiter* as a form of resistance and change: they fight against the 'Märchen von der Multikulturalität' ('the myth of multiculturalism') and their 'Opferrolle' ('role as victims').¹⁷⁰ The result should be an alternative to 'pure' ethnicities: Zaimoğlu wishes 'daß diese Kanaksterbewegung eine richtige Alternative wird zu all diesen Entgleisungen wie der Reethnisierung'.¹⁷¹ With his 'protocols' of supposedly real interviews, Zaimoğlu claims authenticity for the German Turkish voices raised in *Kanak Sprak* and can therefore offer 'authentic' alternatives to 'diese scheiße mit den zwei kulturen' ('this shit about the two cultures') (*Kanak Sprak*, pp. 95-96), thus educating his German audience.¹⁷² Identity is fluid and can neither be fixed in the *in-between* nor the *either ... or* (this aspect is of great significance in *The Black Album*).¹⁷³ Like Kureishi's Muslims, Zaimoğlu's fictionalized *Kanaken* are aiming for stability away from notions of cultural in-betweenness. Yet as this security is not

¹⁶⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 102; original emphasis.

¹⁶⁶ See *Album*, pp. 47-54 (which includes a discussion of a music video by Prince as transgender performance) or p. 59. *The Black Album* takes its title from a title of one of Prince's albums, thus immediately drawing attention to the unstableness of identities.

¹⁶⁷ See Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*, p. 128.

¹⁶⁸ Ranasinha, *Hanif Kureishi*, p. 70. See also Ranasinha's comment: 'Many black Britons prefer to describe themselves as "British" citizens rather than as "English": the latter is more overtly imbricated in exclusive monocultural terms to signify whiteness. In contrast, Kureishi and his characters identify themselves primarily with Englishness. [...] Both terms are used problematically to exclude' (p. 4). Throughout this chapter, I referred to Kureishi's characters as 'British Muslims' as I could not make out the specifically 'English' nature of their Muslim identity in *The Black Album*.

¹⁶⁹ Zaimoğlu, 'KümmelContra', pp. 174-81 (p. 176): 'I don't want a parallel world to the mainstream'.

¹⁷⁰ Zaimoğlu, preface 'Kanak Sprak', in *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 9-18 (p. 11 and p. 12)

¹⁷¹ Zaimoğlu, 'Eure Coolness ist Gigaout', pp. 23-32 (p. 30): 'that this *Kanakster* movement will become a real alternative to all those aberrations such as re-ethnicizing'.

¹⁷² This aspect of educating the German readership will be taken up and elaborated on in the conclusion to Chapter 4 (Section 4.3).

¹⁷³ See Stein, *Black British Literature*, p. 12.

provided by the country they are 'at home' in, they need to define their own spaces of belonging.

Subsequently, the young Muslims in *Kanak Sprak* pursue a cultural definition of their religion; they tend to turn away from the older generation's strong sense of religion that, although different in an officially secular Turkey, was revived in the new environment as a means of stability and of control of their children. Furthermore, theirs is primarily a sexualized masculinity which is largely constructed at the expense of women. Women are used for male fantasies of power, and for sexual and physical strength, which men seem to regard as the prerequisite for self-determination. Thus, the *Kanaken* often use and then re-appropriate racist stereotypes in order to both be able to have a voice in the mainstream discourse at all and initiate subversions of one-sided perceptions.

In contrast, in *The Black Album* reconstructions of masculinity mainly take place via religion: Kureishi's protagonists seem to return to their 'Arab roots', which the writer can examine critically from a distance ensured by his choice of fictional genres, for both a Muslim and non-Muslim (British) audience. He invites his readers to engage with his reasons for his characters' 'fundamentally backwards' movement to what their parents shed (or voluntarily or forcefully suppressed) when they came to Britain in order to integrate more successfully, yet without moral intentions. For Kureishi's Muslims, Islam becomes a form of fight against the West as a corrupt and over-sexualised, 'Occidentalised' entity.¹⁷⁴ Kureishi's characters construct masculinity as priesthood, abstinence, and sexual self-restraint, which the religious protagonists think leads to mental strength and ultimately to power.

Through their choices of genre Kureishi and Zaimoğlu show how differently they perceive the 'Mißtöne' ('dissonances'),¹⁷⁵ attitudes and opinions the mainstream often does not want to hear, produced by their respective countries' young Muslim men. Although differently textualized, the 'disobedience' of both Britain's and Germany's young Muslims becomes part of the performative side of Muslim masculinity. It redefines power¹⁷⁶ and demystifies ethnicity¹⁷⁷ – away from

¹⁷⁴ Hanif Kureishi, 'The Word and the Bomb', in *The Word and the Bomb* (see Kureishi, above), pp. 1-11 (p. 10).

¹⁷⁵ See subtitle of *Kanak Sprak: Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft*.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 86.

¹⁷⁷ See Ha, *Ethnizität und Migration*, p. 166.

repression and possibly towards creativity. In this sense, marginality becomes 'a self-empowering strategy within minority discourse':¹⁷⁸ 'Kanak Attak und Basta!'¹⁷⁹

The following chapter examines whether this can also be said of literary representations of Muslim women.

¹⁷⁸ Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, p. 103.

¹⁷⁹ Kanak Attak's title of their manifesto.

4 Islam, Writing, and Gender¹

Female Perspectives from the ‘Margins of Society’: Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s *MutterZunge*, Feridun Zaimoğlu’s *Koppstoff*, and Leila Aboulela’s *The Translator* and *Minaret*

Having examined the masculinity of second-generation Muslim men, I explore in this chapter the interaction between female and Islamic identity. I focus on the protagonists’ female agency and their attempts to subvert stereotypes. The analysis includes the examination of the role of religion and language, which also shapes interpersonal relationships. Butler’s notion of performativity – again – influences my analysis. I conclude by investigating the writers’ agendas and their relationship to their audience, which determines their attitude towards style, and the creation or use of language.

¹ Earlier versions of parts of this chapter were published as “‘Was deutsch ist, bestimmen wir’: Definitions of (Turkish-)Germanness in Feridun Zaimoğlu’s *Kanak Sprak* and *Koppstoff*”, *Focus on German Studies*, 14 (2007), 14 (2007), 19-35, and as “‘Migrating Words’: Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s Approach to Gaining and Owning Language”, in *When ‘Abroad’ Becomes ‘Home’: The Cultural Consequences of Migration*, Proceedings to the 10th Annual International Ege University Cultural Studies Symposium, ed. by Günseli Sönmez İşçi, Dilek Direnç, and Güliden Hatipoğlu (Bornova-İzmir: Ege University Press, 2007), pp. 273-84.

4.1 Creating Feminine Spaces

The mass media image of Muslim women tends to be made to fit the Orientalized picture of the submissive, veil-wearing, and oppressed woman which puts them even more distinctly at the margins of Western society than Muslim men. A number of recently published literary texts by Muslims try to shed a different and multifaceted light on Muslim women: Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Feridun Zaimoğlu, and Leila Aboulela show how female and Islamic identity can interact. By emphasizing female agency both in their texts and (with the exception of Zaimoğlu) as writers, they react against the widespread Western stereotype of the passive Muslim woman.

Like the literary representations of Muslim men in the previous chapter, the women in this chapter's texts are also shown to create their own spaces for negotiating their identities beyond societal and religious restrictions and conventions. In Islam as in Christianity and Judaism, women are widely seen as 'physical markers of social norms'; their 'physical absence [...] from public space occupied by men' denies their active participation in society.² As 'women and the family [are perceived] as the foundation of the Islamic community, the heart of Muslim society' which is 'reflected in Islamic law',³ they, in particular, are rule-bound and connected with 'notions of the sacred.'⁴ Therefore, even though men and women are equal before God and have the same rights and duties in Islam, it is often the men's interpretation of the Qur'an, and ultimately, their exercise of power, rather than Islam itself, which segregates women from both the public and religious domains, and binds them to the traditional roles of housewives and mothers.

In that respect, women tend to be doubly weakened and marginalized. John McLeod calls this the 'double colonisation' of women:⁵ colonized women, who were *made* Oriental by the Western colonizers, tend to have the weakest voice – if they have one at all in their own culture, let alone in the colonizers' culture. Particularly

² Cooke, *Women Claim Islam*, p. 118.

³ John L. Esposito, 'Introduction: Women in Islam and Western Society', in *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*, ed. by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. ix-xxvii (p. xii).

⁴ Malise Ruthven, 'Women and Family', in *Islam: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000 [1997]), pp. 91-115 (p. 92).

⁵ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, Beginnings (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 175.

hijab-wearing Muslim women become 'icons of Muslim otherness'.⁶ The veil represents 'essential "Orientalness"' for Westerners who reduce Islam to its hijab-wearing women.⁷

A number of Muslim women living both in Muslim countries and the West have started to challenge these fixed perceptions and to define spaces on their own terms. These social developments have influenced literary representations of women. Muslim women are shown to create their individual spaces in literature: in Aboulela's texts this process takes place via religion (and Arabic as the language of Islam), and in Özdamar's and Zaimoğlu's texts it is a linguistic enterprise, which implies a creative dimension.

4.1.1 Religious Spaces

Aboulela's fiction examines Muslim women living in the West. (Aboulela has lived in various countries; she spent, for example, many years in London and Aberdeen.⁸) Her novels' protagonists originally come from Sudan. Islam is the dominant religion in northern Sudan. In the south in particular, there are a variety of ethnic groups and languages. In Aboulela's Sudan, Arabic is the official language. Indigenous languages, such as Nubian, the second widely spoken language in Sudan,⁹ are not dealt with in Aboulela's writing. The northern Arab Muslims have dominated the politics and economics of the country. In 1991, the regime of the National Islamic Front announced to impose the shari'a (Islamic legislation¹⁰) everywhere except the

⁶ Cooke, *Women Claim Islam*, p. 131.

⁷ Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies*, p. 47 and p. 48 (original emphasis). For a discussion of the veil as something quintessentially 'Oriental', see Chapter 2, 'Veiled Fantasies: Cultural and Sexual Difference in the Discourse of Orientalism', pp. 39-67.

⁸ It is difficult to classify Aboulela as a writer in terms of nationality. For example, she won the Caine Prize for African writing in 2000, yet is also often seen as an Arabic or Scottish writer (see, for example, numerous reviews as they are reprinted on the front pages or covers of her books).

⁹ See Peter Malcolm Holt and M.W. Daly, *A History of the Sudan: From the Coming of Islam to the Present Day*, 5th edn (Harlow: Longman, 2000 [1961]), particularly their 'Introduction: The Land and the People', pp. 1-10.

¹⁰ There is a distinction between *shari'a*, 'God's external and immutable will for humanity, as expressed in the Quran and Muhammad's example (Sunnah), considered binding for all believers; ideal Islamic law', and *fiqh*, 'the remainder of Islamic law [as] the result of jurisprudence', yet, in this context, *shari'a* 'is applied to Islamic legislation' (John L. Esposito, entry on 'Shariah', in *The Oxford*

south. This has brought along religious divergence and civil war, with the southern, non-Arab Muslims perceiving themselves as second-class citizens.¹¹

These issues do not feature in Aboulela's novels. The writer follows an 'Islamic agenda' which excludes the ethnic conflicts and the religio-political development of her country of origin instead: she wants to portray 'ordinary Muslims trying to practise their faith in difficult circumstances and in a society which is unsympathetic to religion'.¹² The tensions created by the interaction of her fictional Muslim characters with their non-Muslim environment and their examination from a Muslim (rather than Western) point of view are of interest to Aboulela.

Aboulela chooses a female translator as the protagonist of her first novel *The Translator* (1999).¹³ In this text, Aboulela lets her protagonist Sammar who lives and works as an Arabic translator in Aberdeen come to terms with the apparent contradiction between her Sudanese past and her Scottish present, between her religious personal life and the secular life surrounding her in Britain. Although Aboulela does not primarily address language issues, the missionary role of her Muslim main character is based on the Arabic language (the language of her faith, origin, past, and emotional security) whose meaning, along with its religious connotations, she conveys to a non-Muslim, Rae, her boss, thus providing a linguistic basis for their relationship.

In her second novel *Minaret* (2005),¹⁴ Aboulela also puts a Muslim woman, Najwa, at the centre of her narration. Having lived a Western life in Sudan, which she had to leave after a military coup, Najwa moves to London where she finds herself emotionally lost after the deaths of her parents and the imprisonment of her brother. After years of financial and emotional struggle, she finds her way back to

Dictionary of Islam, Oxford Paperback Reference (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004 [2003]), pp. 287-88).

¹¹ Holt and Daly, *A History of the Sudan*, p. 3 and pp. 187-194.

¹² Aboulela in Saleh Eissa, 'Interview with Leila Aboulela', *iWitness*, July 2005 <<http://www.iwitness.co.uk/features/0705fe03.htm>> [accessed on 04 July 2006] (para. 4 of 24).

¹³ Leila Aboulela, *The Translator*, new edn (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2005 [1999]), henceforth abbreviated to '*Translator*'; further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁴ Leila Aboulela, *Minaret* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

I also include some of Aboulela's short stories from *Coloured Lights* for the illustration of particular points of discussion (*Coloured Lights*, new edn (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2005 [2001]), further references to these short stories in this edition are given after quotations in the footnotes).

religion as a means of mental support. In this novel, Aboulela asks specifically how it is possible to lead a Muslim life in the West.

I read Aboulela's texts in the light of Islamic feminism, a form of feminism which includes addressing the encounter between East and West in the light of the role of Muslim women in patriarchal societies.¹⁵ Islamic feminist critics such as Egyptian-American sociologist and historian Leila Ahmed or Moroccan feminist sociologist Fatima Mernissi analyse a 'feminised space which may be said to operate between the continuing pressure of Western cultural imperialism, and conservative, anti-modernist cultural Islamism';¹⁶ yet they also question what is 'so-called Islamic such as veiling, segregation and seclusion'.¹⁷

Although the tensions between Islam and the West are already inherent in the very definition of what feminism means, and is supposed to stand and struggle for, there are women who call themselves Islamic *and* feminist.¹⁸ Feminism is often regarded as something that developed in the West and that campaigns for, for example, the equality between men and women or the 'liberation' of women from patriarchal notions of womanhood. It is frequently assumed that these concepts are not negotiable within an Islamic framework, and the question arises whether an Islamic version of feminism is possible at all.¹⁹ Furthermore, the supposed oppression of 'the poor Muslim woman' can result in tensions with Western feminists who, assuming that she has no voice, want to help her and therefore speak

¹⁵ In the following, I refer to this kind of feminism as 'Islamic feminism' to emphasize the religio-political aspect of this phenomenon, which is significant for Aboulela's work. As in other forms of feminism there is a variety of feminisms coming from Muslim countries, focusing on specific aspects, for example, politics (Islamist), culture (Arab), religion (Muslim), or Lebanese secular feminism. I would like to thank Christine Lindner for clarifying some aspects relating to feminism and Islam. In secondary literature, the differences between Arab and Islamic feminism are often blurred (see titles in following footnotes).

¹⁶ Nash, 'Re-sitting Religion and Creating Feminised Space in the Fiction of Ahdaf Soueif and Leila Aboulela', 28-31 (p. 28). For further details on the development of Islamic feminism, see Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Contemporary Feminist Scholarship and Middle East Studies', in *Gendering the Middle East: Emerging Perspectives*, ed. by Deniz Kandiyoti (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 1-27.

¹⁷ Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke, 'Introduction', in *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing*, ed. by Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke (London: Virago, 1990), pp. xvii-xxxix (p. xxvii).

¹⁸ For an analysis of the tension between the terms 'Islamic' and 'feminist', see Haideh Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis* (London: Zed, 1999), pp. 65-66.

¹⁹ Badran and Cooke, 'Introduction', in *Opening the Gates*, pp. xvii-xxxix (p. xx). See also there for a history of Arab feminism.

for her.²⁰ For Islamic feminists, the term 'feminism' describes the struggle of Muslim women fighting for social equality. In contrast to Western forms of feminism, Islamic feminism is firmly grounded in religion, its relation to Islam. Islamic feminists thus re-appropriate the term 'feminism' and create their own 'tradition' in a post-colonial framework. Islamic feminists combine the fight for equal access to rights for men and women and to education, which provides the basis for the conscious engagement with Islam, with *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and a reinterpretation of Islam, its practices, and the Qur'an as a potential defining factor of the identities of women living in Muslim countries. Islamic feminism entails, therefore, the reclaiming of Islam for women based on its egalitarian ethics.²¹ Leila Ahmed claims that there are different 'Islams' for women and for men.²² For Muslim women to act freely, Islam needs to be liberated from its culturally influenced patriarchal attitudes and practices. Islamic feminists aim to overcome fixed interpretations and ideas of Islam, including how women should behave under the 'rule' of Islam (the patriarchal application of jurisprudence). Thinking about Islam in this way seems to evoke a conscious decision to submit to Islam, and suggests a genuine belief in its values as it is not forced upon these believing women. Miriam Cooke points out that 'the term "Islamic feminist" invites us to consider what it means to have a difficult double commitment: on the one hand, to a faith position, and on the other hand, to women's rights both inside the home and outside. [... It celebrates] multiple belongings.'²³

²⁰ See some Western feminists' comments on, for example, the 'headscarf debate' (the debate and court hearings on whether Muslim women should be allowed to wear the hijab in official posts) in Germany (and other European countries such as France), for instance, Alice Schwarzer's articles such as 'Ludin – die Machtprobe: Die Kopftuch-Entscheidung des Verfassungsgerichtes ist für uns alle von großer Bedeutung', Editorial, *Emma*, 31.4 (July/August 2003), 3.

See also Emine Sevgi Özdamar's story 'Die neuen Friedhöfe in Deutschland' in the collection *Der Hof im Spiegel* (see Özdamar, above), pp. 117-24 (p. 122), where she critically addresses the Western notion of wanting to help 'the poor Muslim woman'.

²¹ Nayereh Tohidi, 'The Issues at Hand', in *Women in Muslim Societies: Diversity Within Unity*, ed. by Herbert Bodman and Nayereh Tohidi (Boulder, CO: Rienner, 1998), pp. 277-94 (pp. 283-85).

²² Leila Ahmed in Cooke, *Women Claim Islam*, p. xiii. Ahmed has published various books on women and Islam, for example, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); see particularly the section 'The Discourse of the Veil', pp. 144-68.

²³ Cooke, *Women Claim Islam*, p. 59.

In the following, I examine Aboulela's protagonists' self-positioning as Muslim women under non-Muslim circumstances. This entails an analysis of how Aboulela interprets Islam in her writing: traditionally or progressively.

Minaret focuses on the experiences of alienation and exclusion,²⁴ as it is often part of the lives of immigrants.²⁵ Aboulela shows how, after many years of feeling emotional emptiness in Britain, a culturally Muslim woman undergoes a drastic change from 'freedom'-loving young girl (*Minaret*, p. 165) to observant Muslim woman, which becomes a freedom of a different kind. We can trace this development by looking at how protagonist Najwa perceives other visibly Muslim, veiled women in the novel. In accordance with the Orientalist notion of the 'mysterious Orient', the West often associates the veil with secrecy, which comes particularly to the fore in a non-Muslim environment:

We passed a couple of Arab women dressed in black from head to foot; their faces were veiled. Anwar made a face and, when they were out of earshot, he said, 'It's disgusting, what a depressing sight!' His expression made me laugh. 'Aren't you curious about all the beauty they're hiding?' (*Minaret*, p. 167)

This combination of curiosity and the veiled woman is part of an Orientalist thinking that Aboulela critically examines as part of a Western lifestyle that her protagonist used to have in Sudan. Originally from a wealthy background in Sudan, her protagonist now finds herself on a lower social level in Britain. Her migration and subsequently lonely life in London gradually make her redefine her religion: in Sudan, religion was seen as part of the life of the working class, in Britain it seems to have a more intellectual association for Najwa as she increasingly perceives

²⁴ I begin my analysis with Aboulela's second novel as it describes the way her character settles into her life as a Muslim in Britain, whereas in *The Translator*, the protagonist Sammar has settled in Britain already and can employ this security to reinforce her religious beliefs. I continue my analysis of *The Translator* as the first text in Section 4.2.1, as this section's focus is language in connection with interpersonal relationships, which is also the main theme in this novel.

²⁵ This experience is similar to first-generation German immigrants and male former *Gastarbeiter*. Yet it was often only when their families arrived, that they increasingly applied religion as a means of control above all. The result is often the rejection of religion by their children, who do not regard religion as part of their lives in the same way. They might feel equally alienated, but they resist and 'fight' now, as Zaimoğlu's texts reveal (see Kürsat-Ahlers, 'The Turkish Minority in German Society', pp. 113-135 (p. 118)).

'Western freedom' as 'empty space' (*Minaret*, p. 175). Aboulela emphasizes the fact that Islam is also the religion of learning and personal education, by making Najwa perceive it as an essential part of her life, strongly linked to intellectual exchange with other Muslims living in Britain. Religion is partly isolated reflection and contemplation, but the community of the believers plays a significant role when defining one's identity as a Muslim.²⁶ Through Najwa, Aboulela reveals her conception of Islam: it rejects the Western idea of 'backward fundamentalism' (*Minaret*, p. 179) and embraces the notion of guidance,²⁷ which includes the cherishing of values represented by signifiers, instead.

Aboulela reveals her protagonist's transformation into a devout Muslim and her personal redefinition of Islam through signifiers that define a visibly devout Muslim woman. Aboulela turns dress (the wearing of the hijab) and modest, restrained behaviour into signifiers of Muslim femininity in *Minaret*. Najwa's behaviour suggests that external signifiers can be a way of connecting with religion, and thus give inner stability and freedom. Aboulela typifies her protagonist's gradual identification with Islam and its values by external signifiers, thus seemingly offering a stereotypical portrayal of Islam to her readers.

The veil (hijab) is a powerful symbol, particularly in relation to colonialism, and resistance and independence movements.²⁸ The question of what the veil might reveal or hide is important in this context. As Meyda Yeğenoğlu points out:

the veil was seen as the concrete manifestation of the colonized's resistance to an imposed reciprocity: veiled women are able to see without being seen. Orientalist desire was hence articulated as the desire to unveil the colony, for women's insistence on wearing the veil really meant the colony's resistance to being colonized.²⁹

²⁶ For a further analysis of the celebration of the Muslim community, the *umma*, as a significant factor of the establishment of a Muslim's identity and each individual believer's interaction with his faith and the community, see Chapter 2, particularly Section 2.2.2.

²⁷ For the role of teachers as guides, see my analysis of these matters in Chapter 2. I will discuss this aspect further in Section 4.2.1.

²⁸ For example, many women in Algeria started to wear the hijab as a reaction against colonialism. Here, Islamic identity appears as their only resort in opposition to the French. See Yeğenoğlu in *Colonial Fantasies*, pp. 136-44.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-43. For an analysis of the relationship between women and nationalism, see also Moghadam, ed., *Gender and National Identity*, particularly Valentine M. Moghadam, Chapter 1, 'Introduction and Overview: Gender Dynamics of Nationalism, Revolution and Islamization', pp. 1-17.

The veil was perceived as a threat, and it became 'a Western product in the sense of the creation of a "colonial traditionalism" [as described by Bourdieu].'³⁰

The hijab becomes part of the performance of a female Muslim's identity in *Minaret*.³¹ This identity requires the observation of rituals and guidelines (for example, praying and interacting with other Muslims) to create an 'authentic' religious self.³² Aboulela designs a character who, through the veil, appears as a 'true' Muslim. Occasionally, the veil serves as a device of separation from Western 'indecent' in the text: it helps Najwa preserve her Islamic identity and (female) dignity, and encourages the 'revitalization and restoration of the native [here exclusively Muslim; F.M.] culture'; it is a 'return to [an] original Islam'.³³ Even though Najwa lives in another culture, this does not seem to have an effect on her perception of Islam: although Islam in *Minaret* adapts to a new environment, it is not open to 'foreign' influences. I read Najwa's path to religion as the result of what Aboulela depicts as the in-between position of a devout Muslim in the West and the struggle to define a believer's identity in a non-Muslim environment. This comes to the fore when, for instance, Najwa compares herself with younger British Muslims:

Usually the young Muslim girls who have been born and brought up in Britain puzzle me though I admire them. They strike me as being very British, very much at home in London. Some of them wear hijab, some don't. They have individuality and an outspokenness I didn't have when I was their age, but they lack the preciousness and glamour we girls in Khartoum had. (*Minaret*, p. 77)

Najwa seems to be one generation 'behind': moving from one (a Western) to another (a religious) lifestyle, she is not able to reinterpret her religion under Western circumstances. She can only take on religion literally, and cannot transform or re-appropriate her role as a Muslim woman. Retracing one's religious roots seems to include a more literal, traditional understanding of Islam. Here, Islam means purity: by making Najwa interpret Islam literally, Aboulela attempts to show how Islam offers definiteness in an ambiguous West that often offers too many options.

³⁰ Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies*, pp. 142-43.

³¹ The performativity of female Muslim identity will be explored in more detail in Section 4.2.

³² Cf. Butler's reference to repetition as an essential part of gender performativity in *Bodies That Matter*, p. 12.

³³ Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies*, p. 139.

In previously discussed texts such as *Brick Lane*, Islam also serves as a tool for stability in an initially unknown West. However, Monica Ali shows us how, gradually, other cultures influence her female protagonists' lives, and how this is necessary as a formula for successful migration and life in Britain. Aboulela lets her protagonist take the opposite route (from cultural diversity to religious strictness), yet one which proves equally useful for a Muslim's personal happiness. Although this religious exclusiveness partly isolates her character from her Western environment, Aboulela reveals the power of religion as protection against personal desolation. Ali's and Aboulela's opposing approaches to the roles of Islam in their writing show that Muslim migrants have diverse views on religion, something which is often overlooked in Western mass media.

Aboulela seems to imply the question whether her protagonist is going 'backwards' (as an Orientalist reading of her actions would suggest) from her former Western, supposedly more liberated life by interpreting Islam traditionally. However, I suggest that Aboulela introduces her concept of choice here: Najwa *chooses* to be a servant of God, thus reinterpreting Islam as a religion that allows choice and freedom to let a woman do whatever she wants. This is where Aboulela's Islamic feminism comes in: contrary to first impressions, the writer is describing a progressive form of religion based on choices and conscious commitment.

In *The Translator*, Aboulela focuses on religion in terms of language interaction, which becomes her tool for describing her protagonist's migration from Sudan to Scotland. Sammar is shown to perceive migration as a restrictive process: she cannot see the positive potential in her life as a migrant. This is contradistinctive to the heritage of her country of origin: Sudan is a country with a nomadic and tribal past (and present). Yet Sammar knows where she is from (a warm and sunny place, Africa) and where she wants to go, or rather return, which seems to be predestined by her name: '[Sammar:] "It means conversations with friends, late at night. It's what the desert nomads liked to do, talk leisurely by the light of the moon, when it was no longer so hot and the day's work was over' (*Translator*, p.5). Sammar's name links her ancestors' nomadic past with her own migrant present. However, nomadism implies constant movement, whereas migration usually is a movement in one

direction, to one new destination, which might be the reason why she does not perceive herself as a 'nomad'.³⁴ The fact that Sammar works as a translator represents her cultural and linguistic migration, the interaction between two places (Sudan and Scotland) and two languages (Arabic and English). She knows where she belongs in this dichotomy: to an Arabic-speaking, which for her is a Muslim, environment. The language of her immediate environment, English, is simply a tool to secure her a living: it is the connection to her non-Muslim surroundings which Sammar literally separates herself from. She does not mingle with Scottish people, and she is visibly Muslim – she wears the hijab.

'Home' can only be one place: her religion. Sammar connects her mother tongue Arabic closely with her religion and thus an emotional home: "Yesterday when I spoke in Arabic to Fareed, I felt that home was close" (*Translator*, p. 106). Her faith is her only fixed point in life. Aboulela is once again exposing how Muslim people can turn their religion into a home: through living in a non-Muslim environment and speaking a language that she does not regard her own,³⁵ Sammar learns more about Islam: 'Here in Scotland she was learning more about her own religion, the world was one cohesive place' (*Translator*, p. 108). It is her work as a translator of mainly religious texts, the encounter between Arabic, 'the real thing' (*Translator*, p. 29), and English, that makes Sammar understand Islam more deeply than in Sudan. As an educated young woman, Sammar masters the English language very well. Sammar is from a formerly colonized country where she learned English to a better level than many native speakers. This – in educational terms – privileged, yet – in imperial terms – minor background enabled her to move to Britain (to be a migrant) and ultimately to get closer to her religion there than in Sudan.

In *The Translator*, Aboulela draws upon the link between a Muslim woman's education and her identity: Sammar is educated and consciously wears the hijab; she

³⁴ I do not regard it useful to include Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's concept of *nomadicism* here (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 'The Aesthetic Model: Nomad Art', in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. and Foreword by Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004 [1987]), pp. 543-51 (originally publ. as *Mille Plateaux*, II of *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie* (Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1980)). Aboulela does not highlight her or her characters' creative 'becoming' (ibid., p. 547): they do not transform or influence the spaces they inhabit, that is, 'fill the space from within' (Claire Colebrook, 'Nomadicism', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. by Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 180-83 (p. 182)). See the beginning of Section 4.1.2, where I explain this concept in relation to Özdamar's and Zaimoğlu's writing.

³⁵ See Aboulela, 'Souvenirs'; *Coloured Lights*, pp. 9-26 (p. 25).

is a reflecting Muslim woman with a progressive understanding of Islam, which – again – relates to Aboulela's Islamic feminism as an active decision for and transformation of religious belief according to the believer's requirements. Her protagonist is at least bilingual. This kind of multilingualism can also be used as a weapon: this highly educated woman is linguistically part of 'two worlds', a position which makes her stronger. She is, to some extent, a type of Homi K. Bhabha's *Mimic Men* who have the advantage of a multidimensional view on their environment.³⁶ In *The Translator*, this *double vision* is shown to be essential for Sammar's life: she is the connector between English and Arabic, and, on the basis of this position, the missionary who shapes her own destiny as a Muslim woman by trying to convince Rae to convert to Islam and to be her husband.

In her novels, Aboulela puts her 'Islamic agenda' into literary practice. By describing how her protagonists find their way (back) to Islam, she shows the potential power of religious belief in both Islam's traditional perception by an accepting believer in *Minaret* and a more progressive understanding of this religion by a highly educated believer in *The Translator*, thus balancing two different interpretations of Islam. Both women's Muslim identity comes to the fore in their non-Muslim environment: on the one hand, the 'cold' Britain triggers the wish in her protagonists to live their religion openly, on the other, they only have the freedom to choose to live as Muslim women according to their own needs and desires in the West.³⁷ Aboulela's Islam thus comes across as a flexible and adaptable religion.

4.1.2 Linguistic Spaces

As a determining factor of one's identity, language is highly significant when migrations between places and cultures take place. Like other items of one's cultural

³⁶ Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man', pp. 85-92.

³⁷ See Aboulela in an interview with Anita Sethi: 'So there's more freedom for Muslim women to be religious in Britain? "Oh, definitely. But then you have to decide what you are going to do with all this freedom [...]"' ('Keep the Faith: Award Winning Novelist Leila Aboulela Tells Anita Sethi Why Her Religious Identity Is More Important Than Her Nationality', *Observer*, 05 June 2005 <<http://books.guardian.co.uk/print/0,,5208551-99930,00.html>> [accessed 05 June 2007] (para. 8 of 14)). The aspect of choice will be re-addressed in Section 4.2.1.

identity, languages can either be taken with the migrant and adjusted to the new environment, or entirely left behind. Migration is often associated with the latter: it is connected with losing one's mother tongue, either already in the country of origin or in the new country of residence.³⁸ Yet migration also offers the option to choose or gain a new language as the means of communication, both when interacting with one's immediate environment, yet also – on the meta-level of the migrant writer – when producing literature. I relate Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's concept of *nomadicism* as a metaphor for a creative and dynamic process of 'becoming' to this section's writers: Emine Sevgi Özdamar and Feridun Zaimoğlu.³⁹ According to Deleuze and Guattari, nomadic groups have 'their own "will" to art',⁴⁰ not 'imposed by a transcendent above'.⁴¹ Having a nomadic background in Deleuze's and Guattari's sense, that is, not having to conform to a standard but being able to 'become' the writers they wish to be (Deleuze and Guattari refer to this process as 'becoming-artist'⁴²), Özdamar and Zaimoğlu can enter creative operations which enable them to develop a language which mirrors migratory experiences.⁴³ This process entails the mingling of the various languages which are available to them in order to suit their needs and desires.

Language is closely connected to social dominance. Being able to articulate one's concerns – in the context of this chapter these are Muslim women's concerns – is highly significant. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's question whether the subaltern, or here more specifically whether the subaltern Muslim woman, can speak, comes into play.⁴⁴ Yet verbal communication is often perceived as 'a woman's job': by

³⁸ See Özdamar's concept of losing one's mother tongue whilst moving around. In *Seltsame Sterne starren zur Erde*, her narrator describes how she already lost her mother tongue in Turkey (p. 23), whereas in *MutterZunge*, this losing process is linked to moving to Germany.

³⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 547. See also the whole section 'The Aesthetic Model: Nomad Art', pp. 543–51, there.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Eugene Holland, 'Nomadicism + Citizenship', in *The Deleuze Dictionary* (see Colebrook, above), pp. 183–84 (p. 183).

⁴² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 547.

⁴³ I do not use the Deleuzian/Guattarian philosophical term 'nomad' despite the creative potential implied in this term. I continue using the terms 'migrant' or 'post-migrant' whereby I emphasize the contextual rather than philosophical side of my reading of the texts. My selected writers (and their protagonists respectively) either migrated to Europe ('migrant') or were already born there ('post-migrant').

⁴⁴ See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, Communications and Culture (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), pp. 271–313.

functioning as linguistic mediators between people, women keep (family) relations going and play an important social role. Dale Spender has addressed this apparent contradiction between women's silence and their actual position in communication. In *Man Made Language*, she points out the discrepancy between the general perception of women as the 'talkative sex' and empirical reality that men dominate mixed-sex conversation.⁴⁵ She suggests that the general assumption that women are more talkative is based on 'comparison not with men but with *silence*' in a 'patriarchal order' where 'any talk in which a woman engages can be too much'.⁴⁶ However, contrary to Spender's rather gloomy outlook I suggest that migrant women do break the silence imposed by men.⁴⁷ In the literature I am examining they engage with their new surroundings more consciously than men. I relate the women's linguistic interactions to the freedom that their new environs seem to offer: here women might feel liberated from old structures and hence more daring.

Verbal and symbolic resistance seems to be woman's best tool of struggle. For men, language serves as an additional tool of power, not a primary one.⁴⁸ These processes are reflected in literature where linguistic spaces for the negotiation of Muslim women's identities are central. In this section's texts, the writers create language in order to emphasize different aspects of female agency: learning and understanding (in *MutterZunge*), and the clear articulation of anger and frustration, including provocation (in *Koppstoff*).

Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *MutterZunge* (1990) is a fictionalized autobiography or semi-autobiography.⁴⁹ The text is based on her life in Berlin shortly after the fall of

⁴⁵ Dale Spender, *Man Made Language*, 2nd edn (London: Pandora, 1990 [1980] [1994 printing]), p. x and p. 9; see also pp. 41-50.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 42; original emphasis.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 60. Spender revokes her previous claim that women cannot change established meanings (p. 58) to some extent here.

⁴⁸ See Chapter 3.

⁴⁹ Emine Sevgi Özdamar, *MutterZunge: Erzählungen*, KiWi, 477, 2nd edn (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2002 [1990]), henceforth abbreviated to '*MutterZunge*'; further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text. The collection's stories 'Mutter Zunge' ('Mother Tongue') (pp. 9-14) and 'Großvater Zunge' ('Grandfather Tongue') (pp. 15-48) form a unit, telling the narrator's story of engaging with Arabic in relation to Turkish (and German). Hence, in the following, I do not specifically refer to the individual stories.

Translations taken from Emine Sevgi Özdamar, *Mother Tongue*, trans. by Craig Thomas, Passport Books, 3 (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1994), henceforth referred to as '*Mother Tongue*'; further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text and footnotes.

the Berlin Wall in 1989, and is a conscious reflection on her personal life during this time. This includes the creative reflection on language matters that exemplify her migratory experiences. Özdamar's first person-narrator, a Turkish-born actor and writer like himself, is preoccupied with self-exploration in the light of different languages which she encounters on her way, and their cultural and religious implications. These are primarily German, Turkish, and Arabic which she explores as an influence on Turkey's, and implicitly her own, linguistic, religious, and cultural heritage.⁵⁰

The narrator's linguistic journeys describe displacement and the implications of leading a peripatetic life. Margaret Littler connects the narrator's 'sense of dislocation' to 'Atatürk's attempt to obliterate from the Turkish language all traces of the imperial Ottoman past.'⁵¹ Atatürk's politics promoted secularization and a westward-oriented practice of religion. Islam was meant to be religion and culture, and not a way of life. This was also symbolized by the educated, therefore unveiled woman who became the site of modernization and the formation of a national identity.⁵² The aim of Atatürk's reforms was to cut Turkey's ties with its Arab Islamic past and traditions (also in linguistic terms) in order to smooth the way to a modern, Western state. Özdamar, having received a Western education in Turkey, however, conceives of this as a fundamental loss in Turkey's people's identity.

Yet the linguistic search of her narrator in *MutterZunge* also has a specific reason: she has lost her mother tongue Turkish whilst leading a peripatetic life and now finds herself in the position of someone with a 'gedrehten Zunge' (*MutterZunge*, p. 9) ('twisted tongue'; Mother Tongue, p. 9), a writer who, despite her temporarily confusing German environment, is able to express herself, but who is also looking

⁵⁰ I am aware that other languages such as Farsi, French, etc. have had an influence on both Turkish and Özdamar's narrator's linguistic environment. However, the narrator's interest in language as part of her heritage and culture concentrates on Arabic and its script in particular. If, in the following, I describe Arabic as a 'predecessor' of Turkish, I do not wrongly refer to a linguistic connection between Arabic and Turkish but to the narrator's perception of Arabic as one part of her cultural ancestry and as an expression of her religious background. Furthermore, I focus on the interaction of Turkish and Arabic in relation to German as these are the languages that feature in *MutterZunge*.

⁵¹ Littler, 'Diasporic Identity in Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *MutterZunge*', pp. 219-34 (p. 223).

⁵² See Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies*, p. 128. See also Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Muslim Society*, rev. edn (Cambridge, MA: Saqi Books, 2003 [1975]), and Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*, Critical Perspectives on Women and Gender (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996).

for the roots of her existence as someone who creatively deals with language.⁵³ In order to regain Turkish language and culture, which strongly influence the language of her writing, German, the narrator migrates back linguistically: she explores the part of her Turkish origin that she describes as her 'grandfather tongue', Arabic, the language whose script was used to write Ottoman Turkish, and which influenced Turkey's literary and cultural traditions until 1927. Referring to Arabic as her 'grandfather tongue', the narrator points to the generational distance, yet not foreignness, between Arabic and Turkish. The narrator is partly familiar with Arabic when using it in both everyday and religious life.

At this point it needs to be asked why the narrator regards Arabic as her 'grandfather tongue' and not Ottoman Turkish, which is the actual predecessor of present-day Turkish. Azade Seyhan argues that this 'grandfather tongue' is, in fact, Ottoman Turkish, 'a hybrid language of the Ottoman court and the educated classes which was mostly made up of Persian and Arabic loan words and structures held together by Turkish connectors';⁵⁴ but I identify Arabic as the narrator's 'grandfather tongue' mainly on the basis of its alphabet, in which Ottoman Turkish was written, and the limited familiarity with the language in everyday and religious life. The narrator comments:

Ich werde Arabisch lernen, das war mal unsere Schrift, nach unserem Befreiungskrieg, 1927, verbietet Atatürk die arabische Schrift und die lateinischen Buchstaben kamen, mein Großvater konnte nur arabische Schrift, ich konnte nur lateinisches Alphabet, das heißt, wenn mein Großvater und ich stumm wären und uns nur mit Schrift was erzählen könnten, könnten wir uns keine Geschichten erzählen. (*MutterZunge*, p. 14)⁵⁵

⁵³ See Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation*, p. 204: "'Zunge drehen' (twisting the tongue) is a literal translation of the Turkish idiom *dili dönmek*, often used in the negative as *dilim dönmüyor* (I cannot say or pronounce).' If the narrator sits in Berlin with a twisted tongue, it suggests she is able to express herself (cf. Littler, 'Emine Sevgi Özdamar', pp. 118-38 (p. 123)). See also Konuk who relates *drehen* to the Turkish verb *çevirmek* which means 'to turn' or 'to rotate', but metaphorically also 'to translate'. For her, 'gedrehte Zunge' therefore means 'translated language' (Konuk, 'Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei', p. 146).

⁵⁴ Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation*, p. 205.

⁵⁵ 'I am going to learn Arabic, which was once our system of writing. After our war of liberation, 1927, Atatürk outlawed the Arabic script and brought in the Latin letters. My grandfather only knew Arabic script, I only know the Latin alphabet, which means that if my grandfather and I had been unable to speak and could only tell each other things in writing, we'd have been unable to tell each other stories.' (*Mother Tongue*, p. 15).

The (written) exchange with her past, which was interrupted by Atatürk's language reform, is at the centre of the narrator's interest in the Arabic script. The narrator's and Turkey's past is exemplified by her grandfather, who grew up in the culturally diverse Ottoman Empire. Being Turkish already involves knowledge of more than one language, more than one political system, and extremely variegated relations through history between religion and state. Yet the narrator chooses to examine closely one particular aspect of her hybridity, an aspect which is strongly linked to notions of past and heritage. This is not an examination of foreignness but rather the attempt to overcome the politically enforced estrangement between Turkey's past and present after Atatürk's westernizing reforms of the 1920s. This examination of parts of her linguistic heritage relates to her critical re-evaluation of her religious background in the context of migration and her existence as a writer.⁵⁶ It is precisely what Littler refers to as the question 'as to the viability to this project' that enables Özdamar to redefine and accept herself as a migrant and that provides the basis for her existence as a writer.⁵⁷ She works with a curious and, simultaneously, critical awareness of the language of Islam, Arabic, and is thus strongly connected with her religious and cultural past, while being severed from it by Atatürk's reforms. The narrator's historical orientation towards her Islamic heritage now seems to promise a sense of unity and security in an initially alien place (Germany). Yet the driving force behind her narrator's approach to her heterogeneous Ottoman origins is to make sense of her hybrid present – with the help of her equally hybrid grandfather – rather than a longing for a lost homeland.

I read the narrator's wish to rediscover part of her cultural heritage as a form of backward and forward movement between languages and cultures, as acts of translation which make particularly detailed insights into a migrant's identity possible. The relocation of language is the technique Özdamar's narrator employs to explore Arabic in relation to herself as a migrant. I identify this kind of displacement of language as the literal movement of items of a language to another linguistic and cultural context. Özdamar's narrator explores her linguistic yet also literal

⁵⁶ For further discussions of this point, see Bird, *Women Writers and National Identity*, Littler, esp. 'Emine Sevgi Özdamar, "Mutter Zunge" and "Großvater Zunge" (1990)', pp. 118-38, and Seyhan, esp. *Writing Outside the Nation*.

⁵⁷ Littler, 'Diasporic Identity', pp. 219-34 (p. 223).

displacement by negotiating the meanings of Arabic words in relation to her German Turkish present.⁵⁸ She ventures on this backward journey to be able to move forward again as a German Turkish migrant writer with a redefined language.

After the publication of *Kanak Sprak*, many of his female readers and attendees of his readings urged Feridun Zaimoğlu to publish a female pendant to the Muslim men's views on their position in German culture. Zaimoğlu duly produced *Koppstoff: Kanaka Sprak vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (1998).⁵⁹

In *Koppstoff*, Zaimoğlu lets his interlocutors recognize language as their tool of struggle.⁶⁰ Their use of language reflects the women's overall higher, more educated status than that of the *Kanaken* of the previous chapter, and the question is whether, in that respect, they really are 'marginal'.⁶¹ Zaimoğlu tells us that most of his interlocutors approached him after public readings of his work.⁶² Their interest in his writing already reveals an educational level that many of Zaimoğlu's male interlocutors did not share, yet there are also differences in the women's positions in society which are partly expressed linguistically.⁶³

One of the most prominent features of the *Kanakas'* language is the use of words that emphasize their toughness. This linguistic toughness is mainly expressed in the inventive use of language such as the creation of 'strong' nouns. Nouns, along with their capitalization which is not practised in the male '*Kanak Sprak*', are a prominent feature of the German language. The *Kanakas'* creation of nouns suggests

⁵⁸ Cf. Konuk, *Identitäten im Prozeß*, p. 84.

⁵⁹ Feridun Zaimoglu, *Koppstoff: Kanaka Sprak vom Rande der Gesellschaft*, 3rd edn (Hamburg: Rotbuch, 2000 [1998]), henceforth abbreviated to '*Koppstoff*'; further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

⁶⁰ As in Chapter 3, I follow the practice of using umbrella terms such as '*Kanakas*', 'German Turks', and 'Muslims' (as they are either used by Zaimoğlu himself or to refer to the interviewees' cultural and/or religious backgrounds) in order to differentiate them from 'mainstream Germans'.

⁶¹ Cf. Skiba, 'Ethnolektale und literalisierte Hybridität in Feridun Zaimoglu's *Kanak Sprak*', pp. 183-204 (p. 191).

⁶² Zaimoğlu, 'Vorwort' ('Preface'), in *Koppstoff*, pp. 9-10 (p. 9).

⁶³ I already pointed out that there are linguistic differences between '*Kanak Sprak*' (the female version being '*Kanaka Sprak*') and the actual speech of young German Turks. For example, there is hardly any genuine code switching, which is one of the most prominent features of the language of children of former immigrants. However, it would go beyond the scope of this chapter to analyse the *Kanakas'* language to the actual speech of young German Turkish women. For a detailed linguistic analysis of 'linguistic characteristics of the actual speech of Turkish/German bilinguals which are not present in Zaimoglu's text', see Pfaff, 'Kanaken in Alemannistan', pp. 195-225 (pp. 214-20).

fighting the German mainstream⁶⁴ by linguistically using German 'weapons': pejorative words such as 'Alemangeschichtsfuck', 'Insgesichtspucker', 'Radieschenvonuntenrieher'⁶⁵ (*Koppstoff*, pp. 32-33) reveal a creative resistance to the negative use of expressions such as 'Kanake'. This postcolonial practice of re-appropriating and transforming insulting names denies the privilege of German. Through his *Kanakas*, Zaimoğlu abrogates the 'centre's' (linguistic) authenticity and appropriates the dominant culture's language to make the mainstream aware of their own one-dimensional attitude towards 'foreigners'. His German Turkish women twist language and make it relevant to their situation as 'different' Germans. By creating their own 'reality' in that way, the *Kanakas* reclaim their pride and power, at least in linguistic terms.⁶⁶

Zaimoğlu also exposes the reclaiming of their linguistic power as the *Kanakas*' opposition to fellow Muslim men whom they often perceive as 'zu soft' ('too soft') (*Koppstoff*, p. 11). This also comes to the fore through their use of Turkish. Employing their mother tongue demonstrates their linguistic power over men, who hardly use standard Turkish in their 'Kanak Sprach'. The re-appropriation of Turkish as a tool for resistance is something the *Kanaken* hardly ever do, and the *Kanakas* are shown to enjoy their linguistic advantage over non-Turkish speakers. The women seem to regard the male *Kanaken* as too weak to speak their mother tongue as the language of struggle, which gives the women the chance to assert themselves as German Turks, that is, Germans with the potential to stir up fossilized perceptions of 'foreigners'. This comes across as resistance to nostalgia or to longing for a lost home of the kind that is often associated with older male immigrants. Turkishness serves as a means of expressing discontent with the German mainstream instead: 'auf ne Bourgeoisie voller Künste geschissen'⁶⁷ (Ferah, 24, Studentin (Film- und Fernsehen) [student (film and television)]; *Koppstoff*, p. 16). Here, it is mainly the Orientalism of the German public (which often includes having a 'foreigner' as a good friend as a symbol of status) that Ferah is angry about. Although she does not

⁶⁴ The *Kanakas* use the term 'fight' when referring to their struggle with the German mainstream. In English, the term 'struggle' refers to what they mean by 'fight'. However, as this is their term (via Zaimoğlu), I occasionally use it as well.

⁶⁵ 'German history fuck', 'in the face spitter', 'radishes from below smeller'.

⁶⁶ These ideas are based on what Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin describe in relation to the abrogation and appropriation of English in post-colonial writing in *The Empire Writes Back*, pp. 38-44.

⁶⁷ 'shat on a bourgeoisie full of arts'.

explicitly use Turkish in this quote, her mother tongue does also serve as a means of intentional exclusion.

Despite the fact that the *Kanakas* apply their mother tongue more consciously than their male counterparts, they do not long for a home linked to Turkey. On the contrary, their use of Turkish can be read as a means of avoiding nostalgia, because their 'home' is, somehow, present when they rebel by means of language. Their origin is part and parcel of their expression of their discontent with the country they were born and live in (Germany), which points towards another creative interaction with their linguistic origins and present. In any case, Zaimoğlu reveals his *Kanakas'* easy linguistic transition from one culture to another and thus their cultural flexibility.⁶⁸

Not all of the *Kanakas* feel the urge to rebel linguistically. Referring to herself, Reşide says: 'Ihr Mund ist ein Wortmund. Eine Spalte, die keine Überwindung kennt. Ihr Mund bildet ganze Sätze in einer Sprache, die keine Öffnung hat und keinen Ausgang'⁶⁹ (Reşide, 34, Lehrerin [teacher]; *Koppstoff*, p. 88). Reşide is shown as an (at least linguistically) assimilated Turkish woman. Her standard use of language suggests a passive relationship with the German mainstream. However, Reşide uses German poetically; I read this as an equally valid and effective form of resistance to the German mainstream and as a sign of an individual approach to language.

Whatever the differences between the *Kanakas'* approach to language and its use are, they seem to have the same attitude: 'Kämpfen oder Klappe halten' ('fight or shut up') (Mihriban, 30, Gemüseverkäuferin [greengrocer]; *Koppstoff*, p. 41). The waitress Seynur expresses this attitude as follows:

Der Stumme, der ich bin, hat beuligen Sprech, hat Monsterdeutsch auf der Zunge. Spricht Kackmeierstammel. Und weil keiner sieht das Bild auf meiner Zunge, will's keiner wissen, von was ich sprech. Als wär ne fette Schleife gewickelt um mein Zungenmageres, wird mein Null-Assimil-Sprech gehalten für Gaga-Unsprech. Es fragen sich die Menschen: Hat ein Gaga mir zu sagen was? Mein Monsterdeutsch aber klarwortig, ist mit allen Schikanen gesegnet. Das meiste an meiner Zunge ist Weib, doch nicht gestöckelt und mit

⁶⁸ Cf. Dirim and Auer, *Türkisch sprechen nicht nur die Türken*, p. 22.

⁶⁹ 'Her mouth is a mouth of words. A slot which doesn't know conquest. Her mouth is building whole sentences in a language that has neither an entrance nor an exit'.

Nuttendiesel und nimmt keinen Männerschwanz innen Mund. Der kann ruhig hängen zwischen eines Mannes Beinen. Das meiste an meiner Zunge ist kein Unglimpf, und das meiste an meiner Zunge schabrakelt nicht.⁷⁰ (Seynur, 25, Kellnerin [waitress]; *Koppstoff*, p. 115)

Seynur's German (mediated through Zaimoğlu) appears as an extreme version of Özdamar's German. In *MutterZunge*, Özdamar's German is a subversive German which is primarily the result of literal translations of Turkish sayings or 'highly metaphorical' expressions into German, by which Özdamar emphasizes the possibility of language play.⁷¹ These translations combine different systems of signification. For example, through her literal translation of 'Sprache' ('language') into 'Zunge' ('tongue') (*MutterZunge*, p. 9 / *Mother Tongue*, p. 9), Özdamar draws attention to the differences between the languages and cultures that are available to her, and her relationship to them. Similarly, Seynur also uses the expression 'das Bild auf meiner Zunge' ('the picture on my tongue') to refer to her language as something she creates rather than repeats.

Furthermore, supposed mistakes, or rather unusual expressions, which tend to be the result of literal translations from Turkish, are part of the subversion process. Özdamar makes her readers 'stumble'.⁷² Not only do 'mistakes' show the changing nature of the German language under the influence of a foreign language and therefore question the standard German norm, but they also become a method of her narrator's identification.⁷³ Özdamar, a Turkish native speaker, is distanced enough from German to see its 'faults',⁷⁴ namely gaps in the language that give access to the creative potential for her writing.

⁷⁰ 'The mute one, that's me, has boily speak, has monster-German on the tongue. Speaks crapster-stammering. And because no-one notices the picture on my tongue no-one wants to know of what I speak. As if a giant ribbon was wrapped around my lean tongue, my zero-assimil-speak is regarded as gaga-unspeak. People ask themselves: has a gaga to say something? My monster-German yet clear-worded, is blessed with all chicaneries. Most of my tongue is woman but not high-heeled and with prossie perfume and doesn't mouth a man's cock. It can hang between a man's legs. Most of my tongue is no slur, and most of my tongue isn't churning up'.

⁷¹ Seyhan, 'Scheherazade's Daughters', pp. 230-248 (p. 245).

⁷² Özdamar in Horrocks and Kolinsky, 'Living and Writing in Germany', pp. 45-54 (p. 49): 'They [mistakes] have to be made to stumble, as it were'.

⁷³ See Annette Wierschke, 'Auf den Schnittstellen kultureller Grenzen tanzend: Aysel Özakın und Emine Sevgi Özdamar', in *Denn du tanzt auf einem Seil: Positionen deutschsprachiger MigrantInnenliteratur* (see Müller, above), pp. 179-194 (p. 188).

⁷⁴ See Brunner, 'Die Türkei, ein Mutterland – Deutschland, ein Bitterland?', 556-565 (p. 558).

Seynur, too, defines her own German by the unusual word order, the creation of new words (such as 'klarwortig' ('clear-worded')), her application of slang ('Sprech', reminiscent of 'speak' in 'Newspeak' or 'Oldspeak' in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*⁷⁵), the scoffing at spoken German dialect ('deutsch' ('German')), the deliberate use of 'bad' German ('von was [ich sprech]' ('of what [I speak]'), instead of 'wovon' ('whereof')), and the transformation of sayings ('mit allen Schikanen gesegnet' ('to be blessed with all chicaneries') based on 'mit allen Wassern gewaschen' ('to know all the dodges')). However, she also applies formal German (indicated by the use of the genitive) which shows both her level of education and her linguistic flexibility. On a further level, the reference to her mouth as a sexualized organ links women to sexuality, and thereby social norms and expectations such as honour. Despite her linguistic aggressiveness, Seynur wants to come across as a sexually pure and intelligent woman. Yet she is not made one by men, but chooses to be one: her mouth is not the place for a man's penis but for language, thus for subversion and rebellion. She portrays herself as a woman who is independent of men and lives according to her own standards and beliefs.

Both Özdamar's language and Seynur's '*Kanaka Sprach*' as reproduced by Zaimoğlu are 'act[s] of resistance'.⁷⁶ Seynur in particular does not want to be seen as an assimilated German Turkish woman: she refers to her German as 'Null-Assimil-Sprech' ('Zero-assimil-speak'). Neither Özdamar and her narrator, nor Seynur through Zaimoğlu conform to the notion of the 'foreign woman with an accent',⁷⁷ but create their own versions of German. By playing with socially determined norms, they make clear that it is a feminine, yet individual language they speak.

However, it needs to be asked whether through the *Kanakas*' use of language Zaimoğlu exposes a form of weakness, a rebellion of the 'voiceless'. As I pointed out earlier, women are doubly marginalized. It seems, therefore, that, for many *Kanakas*, the high volume of their voices is the only effective way of speaking as a 'subaltern' since the German mainstream they implicitly address cannot ignore them in that

⁷⁵ See the novel's Appendix, 'The Principles of Newspeak', in George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, with an Introduction and a new Note on the text (London: Penguin in association with Martin Secker & Warburg, 1989 [1949]), pp. 312-26.

⁷⁶ Boa, 'Sprachenverkehr', pp. 115-51 (p. 126): 'Akt des Widerstandes'.

⁷⁷ Konuk, "'Identitätssuche ist ein [sic!] private archäologische Graberei'", pp. 60-74 (p. 69): 'Ausländerin mit Akzent'.

way.⁷⁸ In any case, the *Kanakas* are shown to have a unique relationship to language that breaks away from patriarchal practices of language – and from the ‘social silence’ that has constrained women.⁷⁹

The exploration and creation of language is essential for both Özdamar and Zaimoğlu. Özdamar’s narrator tries to find connections between the various languages that surround her (Arabic as her heritage, Turkish as her immediate past, and German as her present) and to path a way to her own language of the migrant writer. Zaimoğlu’s *Kanakas* express their strength by coining their individual ‘*Kanaka Sprach*’ as reproduced by the writer: it is *the* site of their struggle for acceptance as ‘marginal’ Germans who significantly influence German culture.

4.2 Femininity as Performance

However the Muslim women portrayed in this chapter’s texts define their spaces, whether through discovering religion or language interaction, their identities are also shown to be performed in these spaces through interpersonal relationships with both women, mainly as religious guides and teachers, and men, primarily as (potential) lovers. These relationships are often shaped by the characters’ interaction with language. I therefore emphasize the role of language both for the texts’ protagonists and – through them – for their writers in my further textual analysis.

Leila Aboulela said in an interview: ‘Women are more sensitive and gloomy then [*sic*] men (if it is possible to generalise) – they internalise a lot of their troubles. At the same time they are more flexible and expressive – they do and want to adjust.’⁸⁰ Although this comment might seem tendentious, it addresses the situation of Muslim women who carve out their spaces in non-Muslim environments. I analysed the circumstances of female migrants, their way of coming to terms with them and their success in Chapter 1, ‘Moving with Islam’. The women characters in

⁷⁸ Cf. Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, pp. 271-313.

⁷⁹ Cf. Kaplan, ‘Language and Gender’, pp. 54-64 (p. 55 and p. 62).

⁸⁰ Aboulela in interview with Eissa, *iWitness* (para. 16 of 24).

Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* and Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* could be seen to demonstrate the kind of flexibility that Aboulela describes. Yet as the following examination of different migrant and post-migrant characters will bring to the fore, adjusting to a non-Muslim environment does not necessarily go hand in hand with successful migration: women do not automatically conform; they struggle to find their own spaces and happiness. In their interpersonal relationships to men and other women, and, by extension, to language, we can detect gender performance: Judith Butler points out that '*speaking is itself a bodily act*'.⁸¹ She continues: 'Language is a name for our doing: both "what" we do (the name for the action that we characteristically perform) and that which we effect, the act and its consequences.'⁸² Thus, for the writers, language either becomes a medium (in *The Translator* and *Minaret*) or is created (in *MutterZunge* and *Koppstoff*) to carve out representations of Muslim femininity.⁸³

4.2.1 Translation and Performing Roles

In Islam the relationship between men and women is central in the practice of their religion. It is primarily regulated in the Qur'an.⁸⁴ In *The Translator*, Aboulela reveals how a relationship between a man and a woman can become an element of Muslim worship.

Aboulela describes the interaction and coming closer between a practising Muslim woman and an Orientalist Western man. It is through language and, more specifically through the bridging of gaps of meaning between English and Arabic, that Sammar and her boss Rae eventually find each other – as a Muslim, not as a

⁸¹ Butler, *Excitable Speech*, p. 10; original emphasis.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸³ See Tanja Reinlein, "'Gegen kulturhegemoniale Ansprüche': Körper und Fremdheit in Feridun Zaimoğlu's Briefroman *Liebesmale, Scharlachrot*", in *Kulturelle Topographien*, ed. by Vittoria Borsò and Reinhold Göring (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004), pp. 287-301 (p. 287): 'Zaimoğlu's Reportagen sind nicht Zeugnisse vorgängig vorhandener – und damit relational abbildbarer – Identitäten, vielmehr entstehen diese im Moment ihrer Aufführung.' ('Zaimoğlu's reports are not evidence for previously existing – and thus relationally portrayable – identities, rather they emerge in the moment of their performance.').

⁸⁴ For further details on the relationship between men and women in an Islamic context, see Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, *Sexuality in Islam*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985; originally publ. as *La sexualité en Islam* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975)).

mixed faith couple. Their first scholarly then gradually private relationship is based on the translation of religious texts. Being religious, Sammar completely engages with her task and discovers her strong side in this. In terms of language, which is significant for his work as a scholar of Middle Eastern history, Rae is largely dependent on her, which changes the stereotypical power dynamics between men and women. Sammar has the advantage of *double vision*: being fluent in both languages gives her – to some degree – power over Rae. Arabic serves as her safety net, something she is familiar with; English is the language of Britain, and she does not feel close to it. However, it is English, and not the language of her faith, Arabic, that becomes her tool for explaining Islam and what it means to her to Rae.

He [Rae] said, 'Translations don't do it [the Qur'an] justice. Much is lost ...' [Sammar:] 'Yes, the meanings can be translated but not reproduced. And of course the miracle can't be reproduced ... But even then, hearing it from the prophet, peace be upon him, not everyone believed. Not everyone accepted that the source and wording of what they were hearing came from Allah. The first believers were mostly women and slaves. I don't know why, maybe they had softer hearts.' (*Translator*, p. 124)

Sammar goes back to the roots of Islam, to its spread and development in the hostile environment of Mecca which, according to believers, only the Arabic language can render: translations into other languages cannot capture the magic and beauty of the Qur'an. Aboulela shows that Sammar aims to convey much more than the essence of the Arabic language to Rae.

She thought of what she would tell him, all the things she would translate for him. He knew a lot. Like others here, this world held his attention and the scope of his mind. But he did not know about the stream of Kawthar, the Day of Promises, or what stops the heart from rusting. And the balance he admired. He would not understand it until he lived it. (*Translator*, p. 118)

Religion is closely connected to Sammar's identity, as a woman and as a partner. As Aboulela aims at a literature that captures and describes female *Muslim* identities, her characters regularly bring the question of believing, the 'Gretchen-Frage', to the fore: "Rae, do you believe in God?" (*Translator*, p. 95). Although, at that moment, he

says that he does and therefore dismisses Sammar's dread of atheism, he later answers as follows:

'It's not in me to be religious,' he said. 'I studied Islam for the politics of the Middle East. I did not study it for myself. [...] In the middle of all the prejudice and hypocrisy, I wanted to be one of the few who was saying what was reasonable and right.'

'It's not enough,' she pressed her hands together. 'It's not enough. It's not enough for me.' (*Translator*, p. 126)⁸⁵

Henceforth it becomes Sammar's agenda to convert Rae – this coincides with Aboulela's agenda to show her readers the power of Islam and its ability to give strength. She lets two different attitudes towards Islam clash: Rae is an Oriental scholar, although someone who is open to a believer's perception of Islam, whereas Sammar is a true believer who did not study her religion but grew up with it as part of her cultural heritage. Because Rae is an open-minded scholar, there is the possibility of him becoming a Muslim on the basis of knowledge and immersion in Islam, and this is the starting-point for Sammar's intervention.

[Rae:] 'The reason why he [Fareed, his scholarly friend] goes on is that I view the Qur'an as a sacred text, as the word of God. It would be impossible in the kind of work I'm doing, in the issues I'm addressing for me to do otherwise but accept Muslims' own vision of the Qur'an, what they say about it. To Fareed, though, this is a tantamount to accepting Islam, and so he can't understand it when I say I am not a Muslim.' (*Translator*, p. 89)

Aboulela provides the ground for Rae's conversion: his attitude towards Islam already reveals his closeness to and acceptance of this religion. It only needs some external intervention, personified by Sammar, to move towards Islam internally – and to make him take the final step of conversion. Sammar believes in the strength-giving ability of her religion and wants to convey this to Rae: 'It [conversion] would be good for you, it will make you stronger' (*Translator*, p. 89). She relates Islam to

⁸⁵ This is also addressed in 'The Museum' in *Coloured Lights*: Shadia asks Bryan, the boy who likes her: "What is your religion?" she asked.

"Dunno, nothing I suppose."

"That's terrible! That's really terrible!" Her voice was too loud, concerned.' ('The Museum'; *Coloured Lights*, pp. 87-105 (p. 98)).

happiness, her own as well as others' – and thus takes on the role of a missionary.⁸⁶ Sammar fights and becomes more than a translator: she acts as a teacher and a conveyor of meaning. This is her task: 'She thought, I have to explain things [the meaning of the *shahādah*, the Islamic creed] right, I have to be clear' (*Translator*, p. 123). The notion that the translator has to be clear is essential, particularly since the Islamic creed, a speech act and *the* performative act of exposing Muslim identity, is central if the couple is to find each other as Muslims. Yet translation also takes place on an intermediate level, and certain concepts, such as the meaning of the *shahādah*, cannot be articulated. Translation also comprises interpersonal communication. Aboulela emphasizes this by revealing Sammar's ambition to convince Rae of Islam with the help of her translations. This is also part of Sammar's religious worship. Aboulela seems to follow the logic that 'in Islam, love is actually prayer.'⁸⁷ Through the relationship between Sammar and Rae she unfolds what she regards as the beauty and power of Islam beyond cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Eventually, Rae converts to Islam.⁸⁸ Aboulela seems to suggest that this is based on Sammar's power and emotional strength drawn from her religion: yet Sammar initially fails as a missionary and a true believer, someone believing for 'no worldly reason', and she has to learn, that is, to 'clean her intentions' and to want conversion for Rae's, not her sake, which would be 'true' missionary work (*Translator*, p. 175). Islam's original language, Arabic, contributes to Rae's final decision after his previous, personal struggles with religion. Arabic comes across as the language of love which gives the woman the power to change traditional roles and to influence. Rae, who, in Sir Richard Francis Burton fashion, 'looked exactly like an Arab' (*Translator*, p. 60) and who, therefore, is given the prerequisite needed to adapt to different circumstances (different cultures, languages, and religions), is being taught by Sammar. This is the conciliation between the professional Orientalist

⁸⁶ The idea of being strong and therefore able to convert other people to Islam is also addressed in 'The Museum' in *Coloured Lights*: 'If she [Shadia] was not small in the museum, if she was really strong, she would have made his [Bryan's] trip to Mecca real, not only in the book.' ('The Museum'; *Coloured Lights*, pp. 87-105 (p. 105)).

⁸⁷ Bouhdiba, *Sexuality in Islam*, p. 91.

⁸⁸ In several of her short stories in *Coloured Lights*, Aboulela describes the different perspectives on conversion to Islam. For example, she shows that one's origins are not simply left behind: 'Something Scottish she brought with her when she stepped into Islam.' ('Majed'; *Coloured Lights*, pp. 107-14 (p. 113)). Aboulela also addresses other, non-Muslim people's reservations to conversion: 'It was easier for his parents to accept that he was in love with a Muslim girl than it was to accept that he was in love with Islam.' ('Something Old, Something New'; *Coloured Lights*, pp. 125-46 (p. 132)).

man, who previously ‘travel[led] the world in search of war and revolution’ (*Translator*, p. 62) and the Muslim woman.

Contrary to a first impression, *The Translator* portrays a woman who is powerful and has the strength to influence the man she loves and to prove that ‘West’ is not always ‘best’ (*Translator*, p. 22). Islam and its ideals and values need to be taken as seriously as any other religion. Aboulela thereby uses language (Arabic) to convey her ‘Islamic agenda’: she demonstrates how devout religious belief can enable a Muslim to live the prosperous life of a believer under the strenuous circumstances of being in a ‘foreign’ environment. Sammar thereby also acts as a bringer of Islam. Despite her initial passivity, Sammar shapes her own fate and reacts against the traditional notion of the Muslim woman who is (made) dependent on first her father and then her husband as her protectors.⁸⁹ Aboulela evokes a progressive form of Islam: employing Islamic feminist ideas, she portrays a woman who demands her right of pursuit of happiness by means of a well-informed understanding of religion.

In *Minaret*, Aboulela portrays a Muslim woman who appears to be comfortable in the stereotypical role of the submissive woman. Language, or rather language interaction, is not as significant as in *The Translator*, yet it is the starting point of Muslim identity formation in this novel. Since believing Muslims regard Arabic as the original and only true language of Islam (this was the language the Prophet Muhammad received his revelations in), Aboulela portrays her protagonist Najwa as keen to learn about and to understand Islam via language, that is, learning how to pronounce the language of Islam properly: ‘I want to read the Qur’an in a beautiful way’ (*Minaret*, p. 79). The tradition of reciting, yet also listening to the Qur’an, becomes a performative act of practising Islam and consciously regarding oneself as a Muslim. Aboulela reveals the learning of Arabic as a way of travelling to Islam and to oneself as a Muslim. In this sense, the study of Arabic and Islam is part of her Islamic feminism: generally, Islamic feminists regard engaging with the past, the life of the Prophet Muhammad, and foundational texts as a means of reinterpreting and

⁸⁹ Monica Ali also highlights this aspect in *Brick Lane*, as discussed in Chapter 1, particularly Section 1.2.3.

reclaiming Islam for women.⁹⁰ It makes them intellectually stronger and therefore capable of basing their discontent with the way the religion is practised by some Muslim men on facts, their intellectual property.

In *Minaret*, Aboulela draws upon these Islamic feminist ideas. She introduces female teachers who show how a Muslim woman can gain access to her religion and its language; it is through women that Najwa finds her way back to Islam in Britain.⁹¹ Najwa consciously becomes submissive: by being a pupil, she becomes a 'servant' to God. Religion becomes the guiding tool in her life and is represented by women: 'She [Wafaa] was a guide, not a friend' (*Minaret*, p. 247). In her guiding friendship with Wafaa, Najwa experiences the strong friendship among (Muslim) women that provides stability. Aboulela seems to suggest that men are not needed (or indeed wanted) when Muslim women re-appropriate their religion. This is a self-imposed separation between the sexes (as it is practised among strict Muslims), yet Aboulela also reinterprets this separation as a device that gives hold in an unstable life. She reveals the power that believing women can gain from Islam without being dependent on men. This reminds us of the reclamation of Islam for women as described by Islamic feminism.⁹² The novel therefore suggests a progressive way of understanding Islam by letting women define it according to their conceptions of this religion.

In *Minaret*, Aboulela again shows the challenges that believing Muslims face in non-Muslim environments. She brings this to the fore by introducing women characters (her employer Lamya in particular) who are culturally influenced by Islam but not necessarily practising Muslims, and who appear Western. These women deliberately nourish the dichotomy between independence and being a servant, the role that Najwa used to look down upon in Sudan but that she has chosen for herself now. Similarly, the novel's Westernized Muslim women characters perceive devout Muslim women as competitors or a threat. This holds particularly true for Doctora Zeinab, Najwa's employer's mother, who is afraid of losing her son Tamer to a religious woman. Najwa is emotionally closer to Tamer than anybody else in the

⁹⁰ Cooke, *Women Claim Islam*, p. 62.

⁹¹ For the significance of teachers in Islam, see Chapter 2, particularly Section 2.1.2.

⁹² See my previous remarks on Islamic feminism and the critics mentioned there, for example, Cooke, *Women Claim Islam*, or Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*.

family who seem intimidated by the trust between these two believers. In the novel, the hijab-wearing woman becomes an object of jokes: by making fun of the Other (for example in the form of a theatre play at a party; *Minaret*, pp. 222-23), the novel's non-believing Muslims do not perceive the Other as threat any more. The ridicule indicates that these Westernized Muslim women do not look at what is behind the veil. Najwa observes: 'She [Lamya] will always see my hijab, my dependence on the salary she gives me, my skin colour, which is a shade darker than hers' (*Minaret*, p. 116). Lamya performs her role as a Westernized, hijab-rejecting woman, and Najwa feels the distribution of roles in relation to her own previous life: now it is clearly Najwa who is in a lower position, the position her servants filled in Khartoum, and she learns what it feels like to be reduced to outer appearances (also by way of her slightly darker skin colour, implying that, for Lamya, the whiter the skin the more high-ranking and therefore acceptable a person is). By turning the tables in relation to roles that believing and non-believing Muslims take on, choose, or adjust, Aboulela assesses the challenges that Islam has to face in hostile surroundings. Yet, once again, she demonstrates how religion can make a believer stronger and what power faith can offer.

Aboulela also shows the limits of a devout believer's ability to turn the tables, particularly in her protagonist's relationship to men. Here, we have to consider the notion of women as the bearers of Islamic culture and preservers of the family (which can be expressed through the veil).⁹³ In that context, *Minaret* addresses a conflict: Najwa is neither a mother nor does she live in a Muslim society. The closest she can get to this ideal is by working as a childminder in a Muslim family. Aboulela seems to suggest that a Muslim woman, as represented by Najwa in *Minaret*, 'naturally' has an impetus to fulfil the role of keeper of the family. If she cannot be a mother, she feels a sense of lack that she tries to overcome by being as good a Muslim as possible. The novel starts by Najwa telling us: 'I accept my sentence' (*Minaret*, p. 1). The novel's opening shows a conservative attitude towards Islam (literal submission to one's fate intended by God) which, however, Aboulela challenges by addressing notions of patriarchal society critically. This includes the approval of women's behaviour by men:

⁹³ Esposito, 'Introduction: Women in Islam and Western Society', pp. ix-xxvii (p. xvi).

[Tamer:] 'I don't approve of her [Lamya, his sister]. She hardly prays. She doesn't wear hijab. It's wrong. She has such bad friends. They go and see rude films together. They smoke and even drink wine – it's disgusting. I tell her but she doesn't listen to me. Her husband should tell her but he's just as bad. It's all to do with pride, the way she talked to you just now. She shouldn't ...'. (*Minaret*, p. 115)

Men's moral judgements have always been part of Najwa's life, yet she never seems to have challenged them. Before her transformation into a devout Muslim, she was approved of as Western by Anwar, a young man she knows from Khartoum and with whom she has a brief relationship in London: "I know you're Westernized, I know you're modern," he said, "that's what I like about you – your independence" (*Minaret*, p. 176). Yet having a sexual relationship with him causes guilt within her, which will later partly contribute to her return to religion as the morally 'correct' way of living. Aboulela again foregrounds what she regards as the dilemma of the Muslim woman here: she perceives non-believing Muslim women as torn between Islamic values that still have an effect even if the woman is not religious and adopts Western values (such as personal, sexual freedom). Aboulela continues to follow her 'Islamic agenda' by intimating that a Muslim woman will feel lost with an entirely Western lifestyle. It is Islamic values, also in relation to men, that bring her mental stability.

According to Tamer, "It's not very Islamic for a man and woman to be friends." (*Minaret*, p. 211); but in the course of the novel Najwa develops feelings for her employer's brother, and religion becomes sexy: she is attracted to the 'beautiful, devout youth with striking eyes' (*Minaret*, p. 100). As Tamer has a conservative attitude towards a Muslim woman's role and the path she should follow, Najwa too fosters a traditional, even Orientalist perception of her submissive role in this relationship: 'I would like to be his family's *concubine*, like something out of *The Arabian Nights*, with life-long security and a sense of belonging. But I must settle for freedom in this modern time' (*Minaret*, p. 215; my emphasis). Najwa perceives the 'freedom' of not being guided by a man as a failure. Here, Aboulela shows how a Muslim can transform the notion of freedom as availability to freedom as guidance, thus providing space for an identity as a (rather conservative) Muslim

woman. Yet she has not shed her former Orientalist ideas of the Muslim woman as secretive (which is something the word 'concubine' implies).⁹⁴ Thus, Aboulela criticizes a Muslim woman who unquestioningly adopts an Islam based on patriarchal notions of womanhood. However, the end of the novel (Najwa is planning her hajj) shows a woman who, after many challenges, has developed her own definition of independent Muslim womanhood. Progressive ways of understanding Islam do, therefore, have their place in *Minaret*.

In her novels, Aboulela explores how Muslims learn to lead a fulfilled life in the West. In *The Translator*, this enterprise seems more successful than in *Minaret* as the novel's protagonist is determined to shape her own fate: by taking on the role of the translator and thereby performing as a bringer of Islam, Sammar employs language in order to make religion accessible to the man she desires and thus to contribute to her own as well as her lover's happiness. In *Minaret*, the Muslim protagonist's pursuit of happiness is initially less successful as Najwa is more passive than Sammar and conveniently relies on rules. Eventually, Najwa breaks away from her conservative, even Orientalist perception of Islam and also shapes her own fate: she seeks the 'true' experience of Muslim identity by celebrating the Muslim community, the *umma*, in Islam's originating land on the hajj. By portraying strong Muslim women who learn how to live a successful life as a Muslim migrant in Britain,⁹⁵ Aboulela comes across as an advocate of a progressive form of Islam grounded in Islamic feminist ideas. She promotes an Islam that is based on conscious intellectual interaction (such as translating or learning Arabic), choice, and determination.

⁹⁴ See my comments on Najwa's pre-religious perceptions of 'freedom' and female Muslim identity in Section 4.1.1.

⁹⁵ As I have analysed in Chapter 1, particularly Section 1.2.3, in contrast to men, women are often shown to have developed their own formula of successful migration.

4.2.2 Learning and Expressing Difference

In contrast to Aboulela, many German Turkish authors pay distinct attention to the relationship between language and performativity in their texts. For Özdamar and Zaimoğlu, performativity is largely based on the exploration, transformation, and re-appropriation of language in order to develop individual German languages for a Muslim migrant (in *MutterZunge*) and some Muslim post-migrants (in *Koppstoff*).

The narrator of *MutterZunge* has lost her mother tongue due to her life-long migrations. Her initial approach to regaining her mother tongue is the study of the Arabic script and the examination of Arabic in relation to Turkish. She engages in a translation process between these languages and cultures in order to reach a more thorough understanding of her own situation. In this process, language is embodied by her teacher, Ibni Abdullah. He serves as a translator in more than one way: firstly, he delivers the script, the Qur'an, to the narrator and, religiously speaking, acts as an imam. His service to god (Ibni Abdullah means 'servant to Allah') is worship through letters.⁹⁶ Secondly, he symbolizes a physical approach to language: he has a love affair with his student, the narrator.

The learning environment of Ibni Abdullah's study appears as 'eine kleine Moschee' (*MutterZunge*, p. 15) ('a small mosque'; *Mother Tongue*, p. 17) to the narrator where the conservative rules of Islam are redefined. Here, it is the separation between the narrator and the other students, German scholars of Oriental studies with a curtain, a version of the Muslim veil (*MutterZunge*, p. 25 / *Mother Tongue*, p. 29). As 'mosque', his study becomes a place of worship: through language, Islam as well as language itself are idolized. Ibni Abdullah teaches Arabic through reading the Qur'an which, for conservative Muslims such as him, regulates the relationship between men and women, 'die heilige Liebe, reine Liebe' (*MutterZunge*, p. 42) ('holy love, pure love'; *Mother Tongue*, p. 49).⁹⁷ The Qur'an is significant, more

⁹⁶ In *The Turkish Turn*, Leslie A. Adelson points out that 'uncharacteristically for the literature of Turkish migration, "Grandfather Tongue" explicitly establishes Islam and the Qur'an as pivotal figures of reference in the narrative' (p. 155). See also there for an analysis of *MutterZunge* in relation to language with a useful overview of criticism on Özdamar and linguistic issues (pp. 149-58).

⁹⁷ See Bouhdiba, *Sexuality in Islam*. For a detailed analysis of the love relationship between the narrator and her Arabic teacher as exoticized and Orientalized element in Özdamar's writing, see Boris Blahak, "'Du feine Rose meiner Gedanken ...': Orientalismen in der Darstellung von Liebe, Erotik und Sexualität als tiefere Ebene einer Hybridität in Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Mutter Zunge* –

related to religion *per se* for Ibni Abdullah who fears the loss of his ability to teach the language of Islam if he continues to be with the narrator. For her, the Qur'an is a means to an end, namely the ability to read and understand Arabic. Here, a secularized Turk meets a religious Saudi which leads to a unique exploration of language.

The narrator explores linguistic and cultural estrangement, yet also the unifying factors between the languages that determine her identity: she compares Turkish with Arabic words in German, the language that she and Ibni Abdullah have in common.

Ich suchte arabische Wörter, die es noch in türkischer Sprache gibt. Ich fragte
Ibni Abdullah: 'Kennst du sie?'
Leb – Mund⁹⁸
Ducar – Befallen
Mazi – Vergangenheit
[...]
Yetim – Waise
'Ja,' sagte: [*sic*] Ibni Abdullah, 'es hört sich ein klein bißchen anders an.'
(*MutterZunge*, p. 29)⁹⁹

By looking for Turkish words of Arabic origin, the narrator tries to find connections between the different aspects of her identity, Turkey's Ottoman past and her German Turkish present. However, this endeavour is thwarted as the pronunciation of the Arabic words differs from the pronunciation of the Turkish words due to the different phonological systems of these languages:¹⁰⁰ the words were transformed drastically when the Turkish language appropriated them from Arabic. Yet at least she is able to recollect part of her cultural memory which was influenced by Turkey's Arab Islamic heritage, to make sense of her current situation as an adult in the religiously

Großvater Zunge, *Wirkendes Wort*, 56.3 (December 2006), 455-74. See also the significance of the Qur'an, or rather its translation, for the relationship between Sammar and Rae in Aboulela's *The Translator* discussed in Section 4.2.1.

⁹⁸ *Leb* is not Arabic but Persian in derivation.

⁹⁹ 'I looked for Arabic words, that are still in the Turkish language. I asked Ibni Abdullah. "Do you know them?"

Leb – mouth

Ducar – befall

Mazi – past [...]

Yetim – orphan

"Yes," said Ibni Abdullah, "that sounds a bit like it." (*Mother Tongue*, p. 34).

¹⁰⁰ Littler, 'Diasporic Identity', pp. 219-34 (p. 228).

and culturally different environment of Germany.¹⁰¹ She associates certain differences between the various sides of her identity with the differences between Arabic and Turkish. These differences are based on diverse language systems and language change (the different pronunciation of Arabic words and Turkish words of Arabic origin), and the narrator compares them with her own development from childhood to adulthood, from her life in Turkey to her life in Germany, and from her existence as a migrant to her creative transformation of migrancy, as a German Turkish writer.

Relating the different languages to the different sides of her identity, the narrator tries to define linguistic elements that Arabic and Turkish still have in common – connectors that hold her own identity together. She thus also takes a critical look at Turkey's political past in the light of change, such as the language reform, and undertakes a critical evaluation of Turkey's process of secularization and westernization. She chooses words such as '*mazi* – Vergangenheit (past)' and '*yetim* – Waise (orphan)' for her list of Turkish words that are of Arabic origin, as if to demonstrate that the abolition of the Arabic alphabet deprived Turkey of its past. The narrator concludes, 'Dieses Verbot ist so, wie wenn die Hälfte von meinem Kopf abgeschnitten ist' (*MutterZunge*, p. 29).¹⁰² She now tries to retrieve this abandoned heritage, yet without falling into the trap of nostalgia for a country that does not exist any more.¹⁰³ On the contrary, she employs this historical orientation to find a basis for her linguistic future as a writer in Germany. Having come to the end of her Arabic lessons, and to the end of her love affair with Ibni Abdullah, she reflects:

Als ich zum ersten Mal vor Ibni Abdullahs Tür stand, hatte ich drei Wörter aus meiner Mutterzunge. Sehen, Lebensunfälle erleben, Arbeiter, ich wollte zurück zum Großvater, daß ich dann den Weg zu meiner Mutter und Mutterzunge finden könnte. Ich habe mich in meinen Großvater verliebt. Die

¹⁰¹ Cf. Horrocks, 'In Search of a Lost Past', pp. 23-43 (p. 25), and Bettina Brandt, 'Collecting Childhood Memories of the Future: Arabic as Mediator Between Turkish and German in Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Mutterzunge*', *Germanic Review*, 79.4 (Fall 2004), 294-315.

¹⁰² 'This ban, it's as though half of my head had been cut off' (*Mother Tongue*, pp. 33-34).

¹⁰³ In contrast to Özdamar's narrator and the female characters in Chapter 1, some of the male characters discussed in the previous chapters long for a home which is set in the past and in their previous homeland.

Wörter, die ich die [*sic*] Liebe zu fassen gesucht habe, hatten alle ihre Kindheit. (*MutterZunge*, pp. 45-46)¹⁰⁴

The narrator's love for her Arabic teacher unveils the complex and complicated relationship between Turkish and Arabic, and between different – modern and orthodox – attitudes towards Islam and the way they can intermingle. Through that, the different attitudes towards the kind of love – secular or spiritual – the narrator and her teacher want come to the fore.¹⁰⁵ Yet despite these differences, this love enables her to find the 'childhood' of those Turkish words which have an Arabic heritage. Having 'fallen in love with her grandfather', having found access to her past (even if this access is limited and not unbroken), her collection of words that are still similar in Turkish and Arabic can be read as an opposing act to the collection, reintroduction, and even 'invention' of words of Turkish origin in the 1920s and 1930s in order to eradicate words of Arabic and Persian origin, and to purify Turkish.¹⁰⁶ *Öz Türkçe* ('pure Turkish') became the official language of Turkey.¹⁰⁷ The narrator initiates a form of protest against the purity of the Turkish language officially striven for by defining the space of linguistic migration, of language exchange, as the site of language development. She notices: "Bis diese Wörter aus deinem Land aufgestanden und zu meinem Land gelaufen sind, haben sie sich unterwegs etwas geändert" (*MutterZunge*, p. 29).¹⁰⁸ This linguistic, yet also literal movement is also the site of the formation of her migrant identity – among Turkish, Arabic, and the language of her immediate environment, German. In the same way as language is an ever-changing construct, a place of flux, so is her identity. Like the narrator, words are migrating. They change on their journey from one language to another – in terms of phonology and pronunciation as well as, at a later point in time,

¹⁰⁴ 'When I stood for the first time before Ibni Abdullah's door, I had three words from my mother tongue. "To see", "to experience life's accidents", and "workers". I wanted to go back to my grandfather so that I could find the way to my mother and to my mother tongue. I had fallen in love with my grandfather. The words, whose love I tried to grab, all had their childhood.' (*Mother Tongue*, p. 54).

¹⁰⁵ Littler, 'Diasporic Identity', pp. 219-34 (pp. 224-25), and Littler, 'Emine Sevgi Özdamar', pp. 118-38 (p. 124).

¹⁰⁶ For more detailed information on the Turkish language reform, see Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success*, Oxford Linguistics, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002 [1999]).

¹⁰⁷ See Brandt, 'Collecting Childhood Memories of the Future', 294-315 (p. 301).

¹⁰⁸ 'I said: "When these words rose and travelled from your country to my country, they were somewhat changed on the way"' (*Mother Tongue*, p. 34).

the different writing systems, yet also in terms of meaning:¹⁰⁹ the Turkish words seem to signify a more open attitude towards Islam whereas the Arabic words, the 'original' words, seem to stand for a more orthodox version of Islam, the 'original' faith.¹¹⁰ This phenomenon can be transferred to her own experience as a migrant whose identity is shaped by the various cultural encounters on her journeys.¹¹¹ She acknowledges the potential of her ambiguous position as a German writer with a Turkish heritage and Arabic (Ottoman Turkish) roots, and extracts her creativity out of this position.

Özdamar reflects her and her narrator's creativity in language as an art form.¹¹² In the following example, art emerges out of the perception of Arabic letters as pictures, which turns language into a visual experience. The metaphors created draw upon Arabic calligraphy, an Arabic already familiar from the Qur'an.¹¹³

[Ibni Abdullah:] 'Lese, Gott hat es uns geschickt.'

Es kamen aus meinem Mund die Buchstaben raus. Manche sahen aus wie ein Vogel, manche wie ein Herz, auf dem ein Pfeil steckt, manche wie eine Karawane, manche wie schlafende Kamele, manche wie ein Fluß, manche wie im Wind auseinanderfliegende Bäume, manche wie laufende Schlangen, manche wie unter Regen und Wind frierende Granatapfelbäume, manche wie böse geschreckte Augenbrauen, manche wie auf dem Fluß fahrendes Holz, manche wie in einem türkischen Bad auf einem heißen Stein sitzender dicker Frauenarsch, manche wie nicht schlafen könnende Augen. (*MutterZunge*, p. 18)¹¹⁴

The narrator's visual experience of language enables her to find limited access to the Arabic script – without understanding it.¹¹⁵ Language is closely linked to the body

¹⁰⁹ Bird, *Women Writers and National Identity*, p. 169.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Littler, 'Diasporic Identity', pp. 219-34 (p. 228). Here, Littler points out 'the different interpretations of Islam in Arabic and Ottoman cultures'.

¹¹¹ For a detailed discussion on Özdamar's 'nomadic writing' in the context of 'feminine writing', see Ghaussy, 'Das Vaterland verlassen', 1-16.

¹¹² Cf. Konuk, *Identitäten im Prozeß*, p. 112: 'Fehler als Kunstform verwendet'.

¹¹³ Seyhan, 'Scheherazade's Daughters', pp. 230-248 (p. 245).

¹¹⁴ [Ibni Abdullah:] "Read, God has given this to us."

Letters came out of my mouth. Some looked like a bird, others like a heart pierced by an arrow, others like a caravan, others like sleeping camels, others like a river, others like trees flying apart in the wind, others like fleeing snakes, others like pomegranate trees freezing in the rain and the wind, ["manche wie böse geschreckte Augenbrauen" not translated: others like angrily startled eyebrows], others like a log floating on the river, still others like a fat woman's arse sitting in a Turkish bath on a hot stone, others like eyes that cannot sleep.' (*Mother Tongue*, p. 20).

¹¹⁵ I have already pointed out this phenomenon when discussing Ödamar's novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* in Chapter 1, particularly Section 1.2.2.

(language, personified by Ibni Abdullah, actually 'enters' her body (*MutterZunge*, pp. 20-21 / *Mother Tongue*, pp. 23-26)); it is a physical experience. This approach to Arabic helps her incorporate it into her Turkish heritage and, on a further level, re-appropriate the German language as she tries to transfer the visualized Arabic letters into German. Thus, not only does she demonstrate a new, a translated perspective on the Arabic language, but also offers a new perspective on German by enriching it with this uncommon imagery. German thereby also serves as a mediator between Turkish and Arabic; it becomes the language of the Muslim migrant writer.

Salman Rushdie suggests of postcolonial writers writing in English that 'to conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free'.¹¹⁶ In *MutterZunge*, Özdamar's narrator liberates herself by examining the migration of language as a symbol for her own migration – from an Ottoman-era Turkish context to a present-day Turkish context, and finally to a German Turkish context. This might remind us of Rushdie's insistence on the notion that 'something can also be gained' by bringing languages and cultures into contact.¹¹⁷ The narrator of *MutterZunge* demonstrates that the Arabic language is not necessarily lost for the Turkish native speaker after the Turkish language reform of the 1920s. It comes alive again, not as a nostalgic reminder of a bygone era, but as an object of learning and interpersonal relation, and as an art form that enriches the language the narrator currently lives and writes in: German.

Like their male counterparts, Zaimoğlu's *Kanakas* are shown to have a strong sense of being 'different' which is expressed in their struggle in and with Germany as a system and state. This is mainly a linguistic struggle based on the *Kanakas*' enhanced use of radical language when examining their relations with German men and women. It is foremost the German mainstream that makes them feel different, a situation which is now re-appropriated as weapon and as an element that determines their identity. Many of the *Kanakas* experience 'Düsternis und Wut' ('murk and anger') in Germany, primarily as the result of racist attacks against 'foreigners' in the

¹¹⁶ Rushdie, 'Imaginary Homelands', pp. 9-21 (p. 17).

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

1990s.¹¹⁸ Yet they now creatively transform their anger against social and racial injustice into something positive by reacting non-physically against physical attacks.

The *Kanakas* develop a 'Gegenbewegung' ('counter-movement') (*Koppstoff*, p. 30) which incorporates more individualistic, and in that sense stronger, approaches to struggle than the men's. Zaimoğlu is – if not entirely or differently – seen as part of the establishment. Some of the *Kanakas* perceive Zaimoğlu's movement 'Kanak Attak' as part of the system which they are opposed to: 'Anti-Aleman-Pop und dein Kanak-Attak-Schleiß stehn schön Schmiere fürs System, weil ihr und wir und alle Welt Lärm machen für Moneten'¹¹⁹ (Ferah, 24, Studentin (Film- und Fernsehen) [student (film and television)]; *Koppstoff*, p. 17). This opinion particularly relates to subculture and music. The *Kanakas* show a critical awareness of what they are supposed to be part of. Individuality gains more significance than the support of a group. Not all of Zaimoğlu's interlocutors perceive themselves as 'Kanakas', a term which is given by their interviewee (the observer and 'ethnographer'). This emphasizes Zaimoğlu's intervention as editor: only few of his interviewees use the term 'Kanaka' for themselves which suggests a reaction against labelling and belonging to a group in general.¹²⁰ Although individuality is generally seen as a Western concept, for the *Kanakas*, it appears as a female concept by which they also circumvent the possibility of being assimilated into the West.

As a response to being put into either the category of 'foreigner' or 'victim', the *Kanakas* create their own labels. These neologisms often include both a feminine and a strong component. They are, for example, 'Starkfrau' ('strong woman') (*Koppstoff*, p. 13) and 'Kanak-Weib' ('Kanak-woman') (*Koppstoff*, p. 34). These are individual 'titles'. They point up the *Kanakas*' individual performances as young German Turkish (Muslim) women. Butler's question 'What does it mean for a word not only to name, but also in some sense to perform and, in particular, to perform what it names?'¹²¹ illuminates the *Kanakas*' choice of labels: they deliberately choose names that reflect their position as, for example, strong, angry women to

¹¹⁸ Zaimoğlu, 'Vorwort' ('Preface'), in *Koppstoff*, pp. 9-10 (p. 10).

¹¹⁹ 'Anti-aleman-pop and your Kanak-Attak-shit keep a lookout for the system because you and we and the whole world make noise for dough'.

¹²⁰ Butler also refers to the historicity of naming, 'the movement of a history that it [the name] arrests' (Butler, *Excitable Speech*, p. 36).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

match their behaviour, their performance. In that sense, they 'perform what they name'. Whatever labels they use, they put themselves in clear opposition to mainstream German women, who are referred to as, for example, 'Sauertopf-Frauen' ('stew-women'), 'deutsches Liebchen' ('German sweetheart'), and 'diese Bundesfrauen' ('these federal wives') (*Koppstoff*, p. 117 and p. 119). By naming mainstream German women in this derogative way, the *Kanakas* exercise power over these women and empower themselves.¹²² This results in a new self-definition in – now deliberate – delimitation to non-*Kanak* women. Zaimoğlu's interlocutors want to be recognized and recognizable – on their own terms.¹²³ This is part of a subversion process that reclaims the act of naming from the German mainstream. It also comes across as an act of avoiding vulnerability:¹²⁴ by turning the tables, by naming themselves as well as German women, which includes playing with gender stereotypes, the *Kanakas* circumvent the possibility of being hurt linguistically. They take the wind out of the mainstream's sails by being verbally aggressive themselves. The *Kanakas* thus also practise a certain exoticization of German women. This reproduces and subverts Orientalist techniques of classifying and defining the Other as object of self-identification.

On a further level, the *Kanakas*' opposition to Islam (their perception of Muslim women as suffering, veil-wearing woman rather than a general rejection of Islam as religion) also implies an opposition to those Germans who are looking for the Other, for differences based on cultural, mediated associations with Islam: this is a struggle against the Islamization and Orientalization of Muslim women through Germans and their desire to help the allegedly suppressed Muslim woman where help is not needed or wanted: 'Sie wollen mich als Schmerzweib in Fesseln und sehen meinen Befreiungskampf, aber ich kämpfe, weil ich in diesem verruchten Deutschlandhaus bin [...] dies scheiß "wo du Kopftuch gelassen?"'¹²⁵ (Nesrin, 24, Rapperin und Street-Fighterin; *Koppstoff*, p. 13 and p. 15). Struggling becomes a

¹²² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 32: '[...] power is understood on the model of the divine power of naming, where to utter is to create the effect uttered'.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 5; original emphasis: 'One comes to "exist" by virtue of this fundamental dependency on the address of the Other. One "exists" not only by virtue of being recognized, but, in a prior sense, by being *recognizable*'.

¹²⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 2-4, and, more generally, her 'Introduction: On Linguistic Vulnerability', in *Excitable Speech*, pp. 1-41.

¹²⁵ 'They want me as wife of pain in chains and notice my struggle of freedom, but I fight because I'm in this loathsome house of Germany [...] this shitty "where you left headscarf?"'.

necessity: it is shown to be part of the *Kanakas*' life in Germany. Nesrin here re-appropriates what linguists refer to as 'foreigner talk' (a way of communicating with non-native speakers in very simplified terms) in order to point up the German attitude towards 'foreigners'.¹²⁶ She also emphasizes the German women's need of the Other in order to make themselves feel better. (German) Turkish women are often the object of the West's desire to help the seemingly suppressed Muslim woman. Their mere existence enhances the Western women's confidence in assisting Muslim women to 'liberate' themselves. Ultimately, this is a feeling of superiority, because helping Muslim women only works when they remain silent. Leslie A. Adelson reads this desire to help as an expression of Western insecurity.¹²⁷ The *Kanakas* have recognized long ago that they are exploited in this respect. They feel it is now time to challenge the stereotype of the helpless Muslim woman.

Zaimoğlu does, however, give one believing Muslim woman a voice, possibly in order to give as complete a picture of the diversity of Muslim women's attitudes as possible: she is 'Hatice, 22, Jura-Studentin [law student]' (*Koppstoff*, pp. 67-71). Hers is the portrait of a self-confident religious woman whose belief is based on choice and her sense for worldly transience. (As demonstrated in the previous section, this is also Aboulela's conviction.) Although she is highly educated, she does not interact with her German environment more than is necessary – and thus shows her deliberate separation from the non-Muslim world. Hatice also shows her religious attitude by wearing a headscarf and by explaining its advantages for women. She seems to have a conservative view determined by a patriarchal implementation of Islam. However, Hatice is shown to challenge the common Western view of the veiled woman who is confined to the house and does not speak: Zaimoğlu makes us believe that Hatice interacts with the 'outside world' (his audience) and offers a self-conscious perspective on devout Muslim women.

¹²⁶ See Volker Hinnenkamp, 'Türkisch Mann, Du?: Sprachverhalten von Deutschen gegenüber Gastarbeitern', in *Mehrsprachigkeit in der Stadtregion*, ed. by Karl Heinz Bausch, *Jahrbuch des Landes NRW, Sprache der Gegenwart*, 56 (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1981), pp. 171-93, and Marjorie Bingham Wesche, 'Input and Interaction in Second Language Acquisition', in *Input and Interaction in Language Acquisition*, ed. by Clare Galloway and Brian J. Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 219-49.

¹²⁷ In *The Turkish Turn*, Adelson addresses the notion of Western help, particularly in relation to 'a heightened sense of German insecurity' due to an increasing 'centrality of gender in Germany as a fulcrum for thinking about the cultural capital of Turkish migration' (pp. 129-30).

The *Kanakas*' gender performance is also explored through their relationships to German men. As I examined in the previous chapter, sexuality, or rather the 'art' of seducing German women, is one of *the* defining factors of male *Kanaken*. In that respect, their identity negotiation occurs at the expense of women. Some of the *Kanakas* re-appropriate this technique for their own self-positioning in Germany, and sexuality serves as another means of opposition to the mainstream. They use their (sexual) experiences with German men for their own purposes: they explore the tensions caused by these relationships, and employ them as a form of fighting against Orientalized perceptions of Muslim or Turkish women by playing with stereotypes:

Deutsche Männer: Das ist ein Kapitel für sich. Ich werde mal offen reden: Sie halten sich ja für die Größten, wenn sie das schon nicht mehr über ihre Ottos denken. Da steht in den Statistiken, die Neger haben die größten. An so was glauben die, das ist ihre Bibel. Aber sie denken, sie wären die Besten im Bett.¹²⁸ (Banu, 33, Barfrau [bartender]; *Koppstoff*, p. 51)

Banu's comment can be read in relation to what the *Kanaken* of the previous chapter think of themselves: they perceive themselves as the better lovers in comparison with German men. The *Kanakas* seem to think the same. To some extent, the *Kanakas* are shown to support the exoticizing notion of the Turkish man as the better lover. However, I mainly read this as a form of opposition to the German mainstream, exemplified by German men, rather than as a form of Orientalizing the *Kanaken* in the same way a German woman might do by praising a Turkish man's sexual abilities.

Banu also makes clear that most of the *Kanakas* grew up in a patriarchal society. She notices that 'alle haben ihre Leiden, alle Frauen. Das ist nun mal ihr Schicksal. [...] Andere haben schon alles bestimmt für uns. Wir müssen es akzeptieren. [...] Die deutschen Frauen, sie sind nicht so wie wir. Sie lernen alles von klein auf'¹²⁹ (Bonu, 33, Barfrau [bartender]; *Koppstoff*, pp. 47-49). The notion of suffering is clearly connected to Muslim women and could be read as another

¹²⁸ 'German men: that's another story. I will speak openly: they think they are the greatest, if they don't think that about their willies any more. It says in the statistics that niggers have the largest ones. They believe in something like that, it's their Bible. But they think they are the best lovers'.

¹²⁹ 'all women suffer, all women. Well, this is their fate. [...] Others have already decided everything for us. We have to accept it. [...] German women, they are not like us. They learn everything from an early age'.

example of Orientalist thinking, the assumption that Western women are more modern and self-confident, and less likely to suffer than Muslim women. Banu shows that *Kanakas* are also dealing with stereotypes and prejudices. She, like most other *Kanakas*, does not deny that some of the stereotypes she and other *Kanakas/Kanaken* are exposed to are partly based on facts. Yet they address them critically in their comments, and challenge Orientalized perceptions of, for example, the poor suffering Muslim woman. Bonu also expresses both admiration for as well as differentiation from German women. The interaction with German women, is, therefore, not entirely based on rejection which demonstrates the complicated nature of this relationship. It is precisely this interaction as well as friction with the environment these Muslim women live in that determines their identity. In the *Kanakas'* case, as represented by Zaimoğlu, this means primarily regaining power through language.

Zaimoğlu lets his *Kanakas* choose their role at the 'margins of society' individually. Yet he gives the impression that they are, or indeed want/have to be calmer once they return to their homes and leave the public eye. Özdamar, in contrast, does not overemphasize her marginal position, but makes creative use of it without highlighting her difference to her surroundings. Her narrator, too, regains her voice in public: she leaves the place where she was stranded after leaving Ibni Abdullah's flat, the *Bahnhofsmision* (railway mission (or hostel)), and actively enters into conversation with her own situation as a migrant: by talking to the distressed girl at the end of her linguistic journey, she recognizes herself as a 'Wörtersammlerin' ('collector of words'), someone who, by collecting and then dealing with words that shape her (and Özdamar) as a migrant *and* writer, consciously interacts with her linguistic past, present, and future (*MutterZunge*, pp. 46-48 / *Mother Tongue*, pp. 55-57).¹³⁰ Thus, through their interlocutors and narrator, Zaimoğlu and Özdamar raise a critical voice that is likely to reach and move people.

¹³⁰ Cf. Littler, 'Diasporic Identity', pp. 219-34 (p. 229).

4.3 Defining Muslim Femininity

The fictional and semi-fictional Muslim women dealt with in this chapter do not face the question of regaining their feminine identity in the same way as the Muslim men dealt with in the previous chapter are shown to feel the need to reclaim their masculinity from the German or British mainstream. Theirs is an individual struggle against stereotypes that make them doubly marginalized, and it enhances their female agency.

In *MutterZunge*, Özdamar emphasizes female agency through language: she writes in an unusual German which mirrors her experiences as a migrant between countries and languages, yet also lets her semi-autobiographical narrator reflect on language as a means of communication, finding a space in the new environment of Germany, and a link to her past, her religion, and people who surround her (particularly her language teacher lover). By letting her narrator examine parts of her heritage in linguistic, cultural, and religious terms, Özdamar appears as a reflective migrant *and* writer. She connects migrancy to the creative reinvention of herself. Özdamar thus depicts her narrator's literal migration processes as 'migration[s] on a stylistic level',¹³¹ linguistic movements that not only refer to the narrator herself but also to the language that she carries with her, Turkish. This language was formed by the influence of other languages, the migration of – here Arabic – words, an aspect which was incompletely suppressed by Atatürk's language reform. The narrator's explorations demonstrate that linguistic as well as cultural homogeneity is neither desirable nor possible. Her search is a counter-reaction to Atatürk's language reform, and celebrates plurality and constant change as any migrant's and any language's condition. This seems to be possible only on neutral ground: Germany gives the narrator the freedom to embark on her linguistic journey, which is reminiscent of Aboulela's characters who find the freedom to live their Muslim identity exclusively in the West. Although part of Turkey's cultural and religious heritage was officially cut off, it forces its way back into people's consciousness, even if this – as in the narrator's case – happens with a secular understanding. Thus, differences,

¹³¹ Konuk, 'Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei', pp. 143-59 (p. 150): 'Migration auf stilistischer Ebene'.

heterogeneity, and movements create identity – in fact identity is situated *in* movement.¹³²

For Özdamar, languages emerge as modes of transport: they represent the physical as well as mental movements of the migrant writer from one cultural environment to another while she is consciously reflecting upon the changes that she and her creativity undergo. They are expressions of her narrator's migratory experiences. Although Turkish is her mother tongue, Özdamar decides to write in German, which is a German tailored to her needs and desires as someone living and working between places, cultures, and languages. Thus, in *MutterZunge*, Özdamar's agenda is to reveal the process of creating a language (German) that reflects her migratory experiences by taking the detour of engaging with the interaction between Turkish (her mother tongue) and Arabic (her cultural and religious roots).

The short texts in Zaimoğlu's *Koppstoff* show an equally angry, yet linguistically more conscious account of living as someone who is 'different' among and with the German mainstream than the texts in *Kanak Sprak*. Possibly due to a woman's tendentially lower bodily strength, the *Kanakas* are shown to turn language into a more effective and more sophisticated weapon than the men's fists, which often seem to be the easiest solution to a conflict.

Like its predecessor, *Koppstoff* leaves its readers with the question of genre: are we reading fiction or 'documentary dramas'?¹³³ Elements of both genres can be found in the short texts; this is, for example, expressed in how Zaimoğlu and critics refer to them: as 'Protokolle' ('protocols'),¹³⁴ 'Reportagen' ('reports'),¹³⁵ 'Nachdichtungen' ('free renderings'), or even 'Übersetzungen' ('translations').¹³⁶ Zaimoğlu plays a significant role in this context: as 'editor', 'translator', 'writer', and allied 'fighter', he 'forms' the material coming out of the characters' heads (the 'Koppstoff') into 'works of art'.¹³⁷ He uses supposedly authentic documentary

¹³² Konuk, *Identitäten im Prozeß*, p. 84.

¹³³ For an analysis of Zaimoğlu's text as part of the 'tradition of protocol literature', see Skiba, 'Ethnolektale und literalisierte Hybridität in Feridun Zaimoglu's *Kanak Sprak*', pp. 183-204 (pp. 187-91).

¹³⁴ Zaimoglu, preface 'Kanak Sprak', in *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 9-18 (p. 15).

¹³⁵ Sabine Peters (*Frankfurter Rundschau*) on the backcover of *Koppstoff*.

¹³⁶ Zaimoglu, preface 'Kanak Sprak', in *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 9-18 (p. 14 and p. 18).

¹³⁷ Skiba, 'Ethnolektale und literalisierte Hybridität in Feridun Zaimoglu's *Kanak Sprak*', pp. 271-313 (pp. 195-97); Skiba also points out the relation between the compound 'Koppstoff', the material covering the head, and the headscarf (p. 190).

material and shapes it into pieces of writing. Zaimoğlu emphasizes his authority as editor in order to 'prove' the verity of the experiences reported in the texts (he provides small introductory paragraphs to his 'authentic' *Kanakas*).¹³⁸ Yet he also keeps his readership and thus the commercial aspect of his book in mind: the fairly limited use of Turkish, for example, clearly aims at reaching a non-*Kanak* audience. Furthermore, Zaimoğlu's 'translations' of the 'symbolische[r] Jargon' ('symbolic jargon') into a less flowery German are meant to avoid the 'Folklore-Falle' ('folklore trap'), thus to convince his readers of the serious dimension of the struggle of his interlocutors.¹³⁹

However, Zaimoğlu does not make it easy for his readers to consume his texts: he does not provide a glossary for Turkish words, and neologisms have to be interpreted by the readers. This also holds true for Özdamar. As writers, Özdamar and Zaimoğlu exercise power over their readers: they are not provided with any explanations regarding the unusual use of language and, as a multicultural and multilingual audience, become part of the subversion process instead. Language becomes a 'place of ambivalence and of the inauthentic',¹⁴⁰ where clear-cut meanings are not the norm, but where redefinitions of set notions and ideas take place. Both writers address the question of language from a postcolonial perspective: language is re-appropriated and partly alienated for the mono-lingual German reader who is forced to actively engage with Özdamar's and Zaimoğlu's concerns.¹⁴¹

It needs to be pointed out that, in *Koppstoff* (as in *Kanak Sprak*), we are reading a 'Kunstsprache' (an 'artificial language') created by Zaimoğlu.¹⁴² In his preface to *Kanak Sprak*, Zaimoğlu claims to have recorded the language of

¹³⁸ This technique is reminiscent of 18th-century novels such as Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (ed., with an Introduction by Angus Ross, Penguin English Library (1965); repr. in Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 1985; first publ. London: Taylor, 1719)). The alleged editor Defoe supplies his readers with a preface to give them the impression that the story they are about to read is authentic (p. 27) and written by Robinson Crusoe himself (p. 25). See also Zaimoğlu's comments in his preface 'Kanak Sprak', in *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 9-18 (p. 18).

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 14. For a detailed linguistic analysis of Zaimoğlu's '*Kanak Sprak*', see Pfaff, "'Kanaken in Alemannistan'", pp. 195-225; for the use of Turkish, see particularly pp. 206-07.

¹⁴⁰ Konuk, "'Identitätssuche ist ein [sic!] private archäologische Graberei'", pp. 60-74 (p. 69): 'Ort der Ambivalenz'; 'Sprache als Ort des Inauthentischen'.

¹⁴¹ For a detailed analysis of the various ways language issues are approached in postcolonial texts, see Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, Chapter 2, 'Re-placing Language: Textual Strategies in Post-colonial Writing', pp. 38-77.

¹⁴² Skiba, 'Ethnolektale und literarisierte Hybridität in Feridun Zaimoglu's *Kanak Sprak*', pp. 271-313 (p. 184 and pp. 197-203).

'authentic' German Turks, yet simultaneously makes clear that he manipulated the material for his 'protocols': '*Kanak(a) Sprak*' is no longer the language of real-life German Turks.¹⁴³ The style in his 'protocols' seems, therefore, to be Zaimoğlu's rather than his interviewees' style and the question arises whether his books, and *Koppstoff* in particular, are more about himself than about his interlocutors. Although a writer's self-representation in his/her books is not unique, Zaimoğlu's self-staging takes place through female voices here. His subjectivity has already acted as a filter in *Kanak Sprak*, yet it is young German Turkish women, and not men, who speak through him in *Koppstoff*.¹⁴⁴ His interlocutors appear as the creative property of the writer and *Kanake* Zaimoğlu. In that sense, Zaimoğlu offers more consciously created 'Nachdichtungen' ('free renderings') in *Koppstoff* than in *Kanak Sprak*: he seems to assume that the German Turkish women need his linguistic help more than the men. This strategy makes clear that the textualized interviews are semi-fiction or non-fiction with a literary element. Yet Zaimoğlu's firm pretence of authenticity reveals his agenda: he wishes to be seen as a mouthpiece for young German Turks, beyond gender boundaries.

In contrast, Leila Aboulela undergoes a different creative process when writing her novels which are based on free invention. This author, a professed Muslim, has a specifically religious agenda when approaching questions of Muslim female identity, which she expresses in the Western form of the novel, a genre which potentially reaches many people.¹⁴⁵ The novel gives her the freedom to create fiction that specifically reflects on Islam as she sees it. She can circumvent the possibility that readers might challenge her views on Islam: fictional characters speak in her texts, not the author Aboulela who can hide behind her creations. As she said in an interview: 'I am interested in writing about Islam not as an identity but going deeper and showing the state of mind and feelings of a Muslim who has faith. I also want to

¹⁴³ See Pfaff, "'Kanaken in Alemannistan'", pp. 195-225 (p. 220). See also Zaimoğlu's preface '*Kanak Sprak*', in *Kanak Sprak*, pp. 9-18 (particularly pp. 13-15).

¹⁴⁴ Joanne Russ in *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (London: Women's Press, 1984 [1983] [1994 printing]), p. 111, critically analyses how male writers aim to show what is going on in a woman's mind.

¹⁴⁵ As shown, Aboulela has also written short stories, which are not an exclusively Western genre. She addresses similar issues discussed in her novels (and in this chapter) there. Aboulela's agenda is, therefore, a work-embracing enterprise rather than a unique theme of her novels.

write fiction that follows Islamic logic.’¹⁴⁶ Her term ‘Islamic logic’ describes the way of living of her characters and their way of finding back to their Islamic roots, something which the writer experienced herself.¹⁴⁷ As Ferial J. Ghazoul explains, ‘what makes her writing “Islamic” is not a religious correctness or didacticism. Rather, it is a certain narrative logic where faith and rituals become moving modes of living.’¹⁴⁸ On another level, Aboulela feels that ‘the absence of Muslims from contemporary fiction, TV, radio etc. always makes them [Muslims] feel marginalized, as if they don’t really exist in British society.’¹⁴⁹ The absence of Muslims in the media might have been an issue at the time of this interview; nowadays Muslims are more prominent in the media than ever before. However, they are usually not represented in a positive light, and Aboulela’s fiction might contribute to a more differentiated picture of Muslims in British society. Aboulela uses her personal experiences of having rediscovered her religion in the West to foster her responsibility as a Muslim intellectual and an Islamic feminist to speak for and to ‘represent’ the Other that includes herself.¹⁵⁰

Aboulela also addresses the notion of the ‘margin’ here: she aims at moving Muslims from a marginal, usually negative, to a more central, positive, position since they *are* part of British society. Yet she has a different attitude towards ‘margins’ than Özdamar and Zaimoğlu who apprehend their and their narrator’s and interlocutors’ marginal position as a position of redefined power and ultimate creativity.¹⁵¹ In that respect, they are ‘nomads’ in the Deleuzian and Guattarian sense and ‘become’ the writers they are by making creative use of their identity based on movement.¹⁵²

Unlike Zaimoğlu and Özdamar who create language, Aboulela uses language: it is the starting point for her ‘Islamic agenda’, but not the protagonist itself like in the German Turkish texts. Furthermore, as a language that potentially reaches many people, English is the language of her work and living. The decision to employ

¹⁴⁶ Aboulela in interview with Eissa, *iWitness* (para. 4 of 24); my emphasis.

¹⁴⁷ See Aboulela in interview with Sethi, *Observer* (para. 6 of 14).

¹⁴⁸ Ghazoul, ‘Halal Fiction’, (para. 1 of 13).

¹⁴⁹ Aboulela in interview with Eissa, *iWitness* (para. 9 of 24).

¹⁵⁰ Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, pp. 271-313 (pp. 288-89): ‘To confront them is not to represent (*vertreten*) them but to learn to represent (*darstellen*) ourselves’.

¹⁵¹ For a classification of marginality, see Rachel Powell and John Clarke, ‘A Note on Marginality’, in *Resistance Through Rituals* (see Hall and Jefferson, above), pp. 223-29 (p. 223).

¹⁵² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 547.

standard English and not to let the various languages that constitute most formerly colonized writers' identities interact, that is, not to create a language that captures migratory experiences reminds us of one writer whose work I have discussed in this thesis: V.S. Naipaul and his desire to become an 'English' writer.¹⁵³ Aboulela, too, tries to conform to standard English. She does not adjust her language according to her experiences as someone of a 'different' background. Yet in her novels she examines the interaction between various languages, English and Arabic, which serve as an expression of the dichotomies of foreignness and familiarity, cultural interaction and tension, and secularity and religiosity.

The writers' different approaches to language use hint at their agendas and have consequences for their audience. By creating language, Zaimoğlu and Özdamar innovatively reflect on (post-)migration. They seem to follow a pedagogical enterprise: their writing styles catch the attention of the German readers, for whom they are primarily writing. Thus they can educate the German middle class who consume their books. A German Turkish middle class has only slowly started to develop in Germany, and, sharing some of Zaimoğlu's and Özdamar's (post-) migratory experiences, they certainly do not need to be told what life as a 'different' German is like.

In contrast, Aboulela's seems to follow an evangelical mission: she writes for Muslims and British people alike, that is, the middle classes who read novels. (Britain has had a Muslim middle class for longer than Germany, since post-war migration to Britain started earlier than in Germany.) However, she primarily wants Muslims to 'relate and respond to what I'm writing.'¹⁵⁴ Aboulela writes literature that puts Muslims at the centre and explores their religiosity in a non-Muslim environment. However, she does not debate Islam in her novels thoroughly. Aboulela merely explores the dilemma of negotiating one's identity as someone of a culturally and religiously different background living in the West: this is a consideration of religion as an accumulation of values, a way of living, and personal belief. Overall her novels show the temporality of lifestyles and values, and yet that there is guidance and stability in this fleetingness if we trust the power of religion: 'We never

¹⁵³ V.S. Naipaul describes his process of becoming an 'English' writer in his semi-autobiographical novel *The Enigma of Arrival*.

¹⁵⁴ Aboulela in interview with Eissa, *iWitness* (para. 10 of 24).

get lost because we can see the minaret of the mosque and head home towards it' (*Minaret*, p. 208). Plurality has to take sides. Aboulela seems to suggest that the mixing of cultures is an ideal which can hardly ever be achieved, and Islam has the strength to convince people of its beauty and power.

Religion is treated as an essential part of the negotiation process of a Muslim woman's identity. Aboulela's texts, in particular, emphasize that 'Islamic feminism is not a coherent identity, but rather a contingent, contextually determined strategic self-positioning.'¹⁵⁵ Islam is often associated with fixity by both critical Western feminists and Muslims themselves. The texts in this chapter illustrate how differently religion can be interpreted by different Muslims under different circumstances. This observation relates closely to the writers' agendas pointed out earlier: Özdamar lets her narrator consciously take the language route in order to find renewed access to her cultural and religious identity; Zaimoğlu's interlocutors tend to have cultural attitudes towards religious issues, partly even reject Islam, which reflect his perception of the position of young German Turks of the mid-1990s; and Aboulela seems to want to produce 'counter-literature' that depicts Muslims on their way to personal completion through religion.

Despite their differences in the innovativeness and radicality of their writing, the genre and form, all writers portray or represent Muslim women as strong women who have become non-nostalgic and successful migrants and post-migrants. The writers emphasize choice as the determinant of Muslim femininity which they explore in interaction, even friction, with non-Muslims or Muslims with different perceptions of Islam. Thus, Özdamar, Zaimoğlu, and Aboulela challenge the 'margins of society' and rectify the tale of the 'geschundene Suleika' ('ill-treated Suleika').¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Cooke, *Women Claim Islam*, pp. xxvii, 59, 60-61 (original emphasis), and 59.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Karin Yeşilada, "'Die geschundene Suleika: das Eigenbild der Türkin in der deutschsprachigen Literatur türkischer Autorinnen', in *Interkulturelle Konfiguration* (see Boa, above), pp. 95-114.

Conclusion

Islam and Its Audience

Since Germany's reunification,¹ the first Gulf War, and particularly since '9/11', which is widely perceived as a political and cultural caesura, Muslim minorities have been forced to re-position, even justify themselves in a 'new world order'. Muslims have since been defined as Muslims, a visible minority, in the Western gaze: their Muslim identity has re-emerged as a battleground on which Western cultural and religious positions are re-examined.²

This thesis has explored some literary reactions to these political and societal developments from a primarily Muslim point of view. It has examined representations of Islam in relation to travel, migration and post-migration, and the consequences these movements have on Islam, travellers and migrants, and the countries visited or migrated to, whilst highlighting the transcultural element in the selected texts. Reading migration as a 'Muslim condition', that is, as determinant that has shaped Muslim identity from the religion's beginning (Muhammad's and his

¹ For the impact of German unification on Turkish Muslims in Germany, see Helicke, 'Turks in Germany', pp. 175-91 (pp. 187-88).

² Cf. Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann, Liberation Classics (London: Pluto, 1986 [1967]; originally publ. as *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952)); in Chapter 5, 'The Fact of Blackness', Fanon describes how the black man becomes black in the white gaze with the exclamation: 'Look, a Negro!' (pp. 107-40 (p. 111-12)). By being referred to as Muslim, Muslims become Muslim in the Western gaze in a similar way.

followers' *hijra*, their religiously motivated emigration), the thesis revealed diverse representations of Islam (based on a variety of factors), and thus countered a common Western one-dimensional and fixed perception of Islam as an 'Oriental' and suppressive religion.

As I pointed out in my introduction, postcolonial criticism has largely overlooked the role of religion in post-colonial and post-migration societies.³ My examples of English-language writing (as prototypical postcolonial) and German-language writing (as marginal postcolonial) writing highlight the creative potential of transcultural literature written in German without discounting the quintessentially postcolonial and transcultural literature written in English.

Comparative reading shows that the writers create different ideas of Islam through their characters, beyond Orientalist perceptions. Overall, religious modesty and purity plays a more central role in British than in German Muslim writing which tends to understand Islam in primarily cultural terms. Many German Muslim writers promote transculturality as a form of the migrant writer's cultural 'impurity' (the innovative mingling of various cultural and religious backgrounds, and languages) as a means to create the voice of migrants. British Muslim writers, in contrast, seem to regard Muslim identity primarily in religious, less in cultural terms. This difference in defining Islam – as culture and/or religion in German Muslim, or primarily as religion and/or way of life in British Muslim writing – requires a reassessment of postcolonial criticism. In regard to religion, transculturality has less currency in the examination of Islam in the British Muslim writing discussed here: being British Muslim is shown to exclude non-Muslim influences that might fruitfully shape a multi-faceted Muslim identity.

This observation leads me to conclude that the opposing perceptions of transculturality are the reason why Islam is more widely regarded as 'home' (a form of stability) in a non-Muslim environment in British transcultural writing on Islam than in its German counterpart. An exception is the travel to Islam, the hajj, where the idea of intercommunity in the *umma* is celebrated, but, as Ilija Trojanow emphasizes, a pilgrim's individuality is not dismissed. Movement actually implies transculturality, the mutual influencing of cultures which creates cultural 'impurity',

³ See Malak, *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English*, p. 17.

something which German transcultural writers reflect on more than British ones. In that respect, they try to educate their German audience; the British writers I have looked at, by contrast, either mainly reflect on what is happening in Muslim communities in Britain in an entertaining way or reveal their evangelical mission for both a Muslim and non-Muslim British readership. The slowly emerging German Turkish middle class has – unlike the longer established ethnically non-British middle class – only recently grasped the potential to make their German environment aware of a German Turkish identity beyond that of the *Gastarbeiter*. It seems that this enterprise can be made successful by reflecting on religious and cultural ‘impurities’ creatively and by challenging clear-cut identities of both ‘foreigners’ and Germans.

Notions of religious and cultural purity come particularly to the fore in terms of language. The English-language texts examined in this thesis do not reveal a form of *english* (as in a number of former postcolonial texts) but are written in standard English.⁴ A stylistic interaction between various languages (for both the writer and his/her characters) is a rare characteristic of British Muslim writing of the 1990s and early 2000s, which seems to have left the linguistic and textual innovations of earlier English-language postcolonial literature behind. In contrast, many German transcultural writers create a form of *german* to capture the experiences of migrants and post-migrants. This is where German transcultural writing is at its most self-aware and self-confident: it is deliberately different, but simultaneously part of German literature. Through their innovative use of language, German transcultural writers re-place language and thus the text, that is, the idea of a homogenous German literature.⁵ Their linguistic innovations react consciously against the *in-between*. Some British Muslim writers (for instance, Leila Aboulela), however, emphasize the *in-between* of the Muslim who has to take sides for either Islam or the West.⁶ This is where the limits of British transcultural writing as it is discussed in this thesis are revealed most explicitly: this literature does not seem to promote its transcultural

⁴ Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, p. 8: ‘english which the language has become in post-colonial countries’. I coin the term ‘german’ in analogy to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin’s term.

⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 38-77 and pp. 78-115.

⁶ The concept of the *in-between* has been part of my discussion throughout this thesis. See in particular the conclusion to Chapter 1 (Section 1.3), Chapter 3 (Sections 3.3 and 3.4), and my analysis of Aboulela’s work in Chapter 4.

element (a genuine interaction between various cultures and languages on both a textual and linguistic level) as much as its German counterpart. I again relate this to the longer establishment of British postcolonial and transcultural writing which is more settled in English literature than German transcultural writing in German literature. The latter is still widely regarded as 'different', a position which many transcultural German writers consciously reflect on in their texts.

Islam is the subject of (cultural) translation in the transcultural texts discussed here; this is related to the performance of Muslim identities (as migrants, travellers, converts, hajjis, cultural or devout Muslims) and gender. The communication between cultures, languages and religions, and between a migrant's or traveller's heritage and present seems more acute when moving to a new country; when migrants, and post-migrants in particular, have arrived translation becomes an act of self-positioning in an environment that is no longer new, and a challenge to notions of 'centre' and 'margin'. (Again, the German Muslim writers are more innovative and creative here in stylistic and linguistic terms.) Cultural translation in these texts reveals the estrangement from previous generations and women as the more successful migrants. The texts' women characters deal with their migratory experiences more consciously. They act as translators, that is, they know how to tackle cultural differences for their advantage. It seems that the writers have a particular interest in (post-)migrant women. I suggest that this interest is based on a general mass media image of Muslim women as the 'losers' of Islam (suppressed by patriarchy). Many Muslim writers prove that this does not have to be the case: their characters raise their voice and shape their lives independently. With their literary representations of Muslim women these writers challenge and criticize static perceptions of Islam supported by the mass media.

These concerns (and writers' interests) are also reflected in the choice of genre. German transcultural writers tend to write semi-fiction, whereas we find more fiction in British transcultural writing.⁷ I suggest that the choice of genre is related to a degree of freedom which German Muslim writers enjoy: they do not need to 'fit in' to a canon (many critics still do not read German transcultural writing as part of German literature). The innovative side of German transcultural writers captures

⁷ See my conclusion to Chapter 4 (Section 4.3).

their audience's attention effectively (the unusualness of their writing remains in people's minds) and they can leave their mark as educated German Turkish intellectuals. British Muslim writers also capture the attention of their readership, yet mainly through the stories they are telling rather than radical style: *Brick Lane*, for instance, was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction (among other prizes) in 2003. It seems that the greater concern with subject matter rather than through pathbreaking style as a way of gaining attention in the literary scene in British transcultural writing is related to the fact that multiculturalism has been in British people's minds longer; art and literature have long contributed to multicultural concerns. The educated British Muslim middle class does not need to 'fight' for a place in society and – by extension – English literature any more, at least not as forcefully (that is, stylistically creatively) as the developing German Turkish middle class and its writers.

With their different, educational relationship to their audience, German transcultural writers make explicit that their writing goes beyond a *Third Space*: they deal with postcolonial concepts such as the re-location of language, hybridity, the relationship between 'Self' and 'Other' more subversively and creatively than their British counterparts and thus challenge postcolonial criticism from its margins.

The texts I selected for this thesis are reflections on Muslim life set in a particular time and place. They reveal the various concerns of European Muslim writers and show certain tendencies in the critical evaluation of Islam within their 'national' literatures, but as these concerns change, the literature exhibits its flexibility (as I will demonstrate below).

I see this phenomenon (the different perceptions of transculturality as religious and cultural 'impurity') primarily as part of 1990s literature about Islam when British Muslims (less so German Muslims) were increasingly faced with their identity as *Muslims*. This started with the 'Rushdie affair' in 1988. It is only since '9/11' that more and more German Muslim writers have started to address Islamic issues such as the purity of the faith as a result of an increasing public demand for the positioning of Muslims in the West. In contrast, the investigation of cultural 'impurity' (which entails stylistic and linguistic innovations) seems to have become a

topic in more recent literature by British Muslims, which I see partly as a counter-reaction to the British Muslim literature of the 1990s.

I shall conclude my thesis by taking a closer look at some examples of more recent literary perceptions of Islam which, due to their late publication and the scope of this thesis, I could not address fully. I shall thereby reflect on the differences in popularity within European transcultural writing, and on the current and still increasing interest in Islam – a seemingly powerful tool for defining positions of the Self and the Other.

Transcultural Writing: A Reaction to Current Societal Trends?

Issues of popularity are significant when discussing transcultural literature. In my introduction to this thesis, I suggested that the German transcultural texts addressed in this study have mainly attracted academic interest, whereas their English-language counterparts were hugely successful. The German texts have become more popular in the meantime (notice their number of editions), yet it seems only since '9/11'.

I suggest that differences in popularity have two main reasons: firstly, the longer-established visibility of Muslims in Britain and their establishment of a middle class (based on their education from the Empire). In contrast, German Turks still tend to be perceived as Turkish and as *Gastarbeiter*, not as part of German society or even the middle classes (they largely remain workers). As I mentioned earlier, a German Turkish middle class is only slowly developing at the moment, and this thesis' writers contribute to this development.

The public interest in Islam is reflected in the increasing Western demand for 'authentic' Muslim voices since '9/11': 'authentic' Muslims have been asked to comment on, for example, migration, multiculturalism and supposed problems related to them, or on the noticeable Islamic revival in both Europe and Muslim countries. Many Muslim writers are also public figures and have taken up journalistic work.⁸ Being of 'special status', some of these writers make 'strategic use of [their]

⁸ For example: Zafer Şenocak, one of the most prominent German Turkish intellectuals, poets, novelists, and essayists. Recently, he has recognised a crisis within Islam as it is overlooking its past which was more open to other cultural influences. Şenocak thus claims that contemporary Muslims

foreignness'.⁹ This 'strategy' can be read as both a genuine, creative interaction with their particular cultural heritage or as a selling point which they effectively employ to catch their potential readers' attention (and sometimes to educate them).

For example, Feridun Zaimoğlu developed from a commercially less successful writer, who was, nonetheless, highly acclaimed by critics, to a writer who enjoys great success.¹⁰ He no longer is seen as a radical writer (as a *Kanake*) but as an 'expert' on questions relating to Muslims living in Germany.¹¹ This transformation is the result of Zaimoğlu's self-stylization and staging: he now performs the 'grand monsieur', or the post-migrant intellectual, and this is a marketable figure. Interestingly, he avows himself a Muslim openly now which is significant in this time of general hostility or uneasiness towards Islam.¹² Has Islam become a fashion item? Zaimoğlu claims to have always been a believer;¹³ however, it is conspicuous that he did not talk about his belief prior to the publication of his novel *Leyla* in 2006, which is the turning point in his career as a 'serious' writer. As an intellectual, he might now hold a more conservative attitude in order to avoid the kind of provocative confrontation he seems to have enjoyed as a *Kanake*. This is also reflected in his recent writing.

need to go back to their roots and cultural heritage in order to find the 'spaces for ambiguities' to be tried out for the dialogue with non-Muslims ('Glaube und Krise' and 'Spielräume für Mehrdeutigkeit I: Paradigmen für ein Gespräch mit den Muslimen', in *Das Land hinter den Buchstaben: Deutschland und der Islam im Umbruch* (Munich: Babel Verlag Tulay, 2006), pp. 91-93 and pp. 49-51). Anglo-American critics such as Ziauddin Sardar (*Desperately Seeking Paradise* (2004)) should also be mentioned in this context.

⁹ Herbert Uerlings, *'Ich bin von niedriger Rasse': (Post-)Kolonialismus und Geschlechterdifferenz in deutscher Literatur* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006), p. 9: 'strategische[r] Gebrauch von Fremdheit'.

¹⁰ Exemplified by the literary prizes he was awarded over the past five years, such as Hebbel Prize (2002), Prize of the Jury at the Ingeborg Bachmann Competition in Klagenfurt (2003), Adelbert von Chamisso Prize (2005). In 2005, he was fellow at the Deutsche Akademie Rom Villa Massimo.

¹¹ For example, Zaimoğlu was asked to participate in the 'Deutsche Islam Konferenz: Muslime in Deutschland – Deutsche Muslime (DIK)', which aims to evaluate the interaction between Muslims and the German population. See <http://www.bmi.bund.de/nn_1018358/Internet/Content/Nachrichten/Pressemitteilungen/2006/Einzelseiten/Islamkonferenz_Kurzinfo.html> [accessed 23 April 2007].

¹² See Zaimoğlu in an interview with *Islamische Zeitung*, "Die Polemik vergiftet das soziale Klima": Gespräch mit dem Regisseur Neco Celik und dem Schriftsteller Feridun Zaimoglu über ihr Stück "Schwarze Jungfrauen", *Islamische Zeitung*, 06 April 2006 <<http://www.islamische-zeitung.de/?id=7106>> [accessed 27 October 2006] (25 para).

¹³ Zaimoğlu has mentioned his religious attitude in various interviews he has given since the publication of *Leyla*. For example, in an interview at the Leipzig book fair (March 2006), he regrets a 'neue[n] Bekenntniszwang' ('new force of creed') imposed by post-'9/11'-society. He says that he is 'gläubig, aber nicht religiös' ('believing, yet not religious') (in 'Bitte Bodenhaftung!', *ZEIT-online*, 4/2006, podcast <<http://zeus.zeit.de/text/online/2006/41/Buchmesse-Zaimoglu>> [accessed 12 October 2006]).

Over the previous ten years, the depictions of young male German Turks in Zaimoğlu's documentary fiction and short prose have become increasingly diverse. Until the early 2000s, his work largely ignored devout Muslim characters. In *Kanak Sprak*, the majority of his interlocutors outwardly perform their German Turkish identity as *Kanaken*, that is, in opposition to German men, as members of gangs, and as successful womanizers. Yet inwardly they often hold a moral position based on religious values and honour. This frame of mind seems to derive from their Turkish cultural background, their 'folk Islam', which transforms certain religious concepts such as rituals and rules into cultural expressions, often at the expense of women.

Zaimoğlu then shifted his interest in young German Turks with secularized or culturally religious attitudes to young Muslims with a polarized understanding of Islam and worldliness. For example, in his short story 'Gottes Krieger' ['God's Warrior'] in his collection *Zwölf Gramm Glück* [*Twelve Grammes of Happiness*] (2004),¹⁴ Zaimoğlu portrays a Muslim who initially defines his Islam in purely religious terms. The narrator, an Islamic 'terrorist' and almost suicide bomber, unveils the ambiguities between religion and sexual desire, which includes a critique of capitalism, yet – in contrast to the only religious interlocutor in *Kanak Sprak*, the 'Islamist' Yücel – he acts. He tries to strike a balance between a Western lifestyle and religion: 'Ich glaube an Gott, und ich glaube immer noch an den Gottesstaat. Daran hat sich nichts geändert. Doch ich bin kein Herrengläubiger mehr.'¹⁵ For the writer, Islam and its influence on the life of young German Turks plays a more religious role in the early 2000s than in the 1990s.¹⁶

Zaimoğlu's latest publication, the novel *Leyla* (2006),¹⁷ highlights his movement from stylistic innovation to traditional narrative. The text focuses on the history of Turkish immigration to Germany, told from a female point of view. Yet Zaimoğlu's 'Geschichte einer einfachen Frau aus dem Volke' does not challenge

¹⁴ Feridun Zaimoglu, 'Gottes Krieger', in *Zwölf Gramm Glück: Erzählungen*, KiWi, 901, 2nd edn (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2006 [2004]), pp. 122-56.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 156: 'I believe in God, and I still believe in a Nation of God. This has not changed. But I am no longer a believer in the master'.

¹⁶ See also Navid Kermani's latest publication, the novel *Kurzmitteilung* (2007). It is set in July 2005, at the time of the 'terrorist' attacks in London ('7/7'). Its protagonist, a young German man of Iranian origin, finds himself engaging with his religion, his 'Oriental' roots, and migratory background, initiated by the death of a colleague whom he had only briefly met before.

¹⁷ Feridun Zaimoglu, *Leyla*, 2nd edn (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2006).

stereotypes of *Gastarbeiter*.¹⁸ On the contrary, we are reading about the growing-up of a girl whose father is violent. She then marries a hardly less oppressive husband and passively follows him to Germany.

One could argue that the depiction of women by a writer whose previous work showed radical tendencies uncovers a change in interest. Zaimoğlu is getting older; it seems that with age, the remembering of his origins gains more significance. The admiration for mothers (and not fathers) is particularly striking. This could be read as a re-writing of the *Gastarbeiter*-story from a female point of view, thus as subversion, or even rebellion, of a different kind, and a provision of a voice for the formerly silent mother. It is a celebration of women as the 'wahren Heldinnen' ('true heroines'),¹⁹ the personified success of immigration.²⁰ Yet I would like to suggest that Zaimoğlu's stylistically traditional novel implies an end of the 'Rebellion der Minderheiten' ('rebellion of minorities').²¹ The writer seems to know how to 'exploit' his own experiences of his (and his parents') marginality that he has successfully shifted to the attention of the 'centre': *Kanak Sprak* and *Koppstoff* were written ten years ago, at a time when Zaimoğlu himself shook German literature with the creation of his '*Kanak Sprak*'. Nowadays, his impulse to 'fight' has calmed down tremendously, or rather he 'fights' in commercial terms by serving the public's taste: the mainstream audience seems to nourish a voyeuristic interest in the tale of 'the suffering Muslim woman', which the publishing industry supports.²² It is difficult to

¹⁸ Zaimoğlu in the 'Kulturzeit'-interview' (3Sat) on Leipziger Buchmesse (16 March 2006), video stream <<http://www.3sat.de/3sat.php?http://www.3sat.de/kulturzeit/lesezeit/89605/index.html>> [accessed 24 April 2007]: 'the story of an ordinary woman of the people'.

¹⁹ Zaimoğlu has mentioned this phrase in various interviews when talking about his novel *Leyla* (see, for example, the 'Kulturzeit'-interview). Similarly, Selim Özdoğan developed from a rebellious writer to a 'serious' writer with a conventional subject matter and style in his novel *Die Tochter des Schmieds* [*The Smith's Daughter*] (Berlin: Aufbau, 2005). This novel tells a similar story to *Leyla*'s: it is the pre-story of the *Gastarbeiter* with a particular focus on women.

²⁰ See Chapter 1, particularly Section 1.2.3.

²¹ See Feridun Zaimoglu, 'Kanak Attack: Rebellion der Minderheiten', in *Kopf und Kragen: Kanak-Kultur-Kompendium*, Fischer, 15290, Collection S. Fischer, 103, 2nd edn (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2001), pp. 8-21.

²² The genre of (formerly) suffering Muslim women's 'autobiographies' is still in the hands of less prestigious publishing houses such as Ullstein, Goldmann, or Piper (which, however, also publishes 'serious' literature). A number of them are translations, mainly from the French (France having a significant Muslim minority). Two examples should suffice: Ayşe, *Mich hat keiner gefragt: Zur Ehe gezwungen – eine Türkin in Deutschland erzählt*, ed. by Renate Eder, Blanvalet, 36732 (Munich: Blanvalet, 2005), and Choga Regina Egbene, *Hinter goldenen Gittern: Ich wurde im Harem geboren* (Munich: Ullstein, 2005 [2001]), then published in its 9th edition, thus showing the popularity of these 'autobiographies'.

subvert fixed public views on Islam; yet texts such as *Leyla* do not contribute to the questioning of set opinions.

Are 'Mißtöne' ('dissonances')²³ out of fashion, or are they not necessary anymore? I do not think that the latter is the case, but the 'margins' have largely been silenced again – or silenced themselves and moved to the 'centre'. I am not interested in a literature that is 'different' for its 'exotic' value, but subversive challenges to German literature are hardly audible right now.²⁴

Yet Zaimoğlu is still blatant in a different genre. He has written radical texts for the stage, which now appears as a more innovative space for maladjusted voices than prose. *Schwarze Jungfrauen* [*Black Virgins*] (world premiere March 2006, Hebbel-Theater, Berlin) is Zaimoğlu's literary answer to the political and societal debate on openly lived Islam in Germany. Like *Koppstoff* (or the play *Almanya* (world premiere March 2004, Theater im Depot, Dortmund), which is loosely based on these texts), the play's Muslim women's monologues are based on supposedly authentic interviews with Muslim women (Zaimoğlu calls them 'neo-Muslima'²⁵). They are angry, provocative, and eloquent. Like in *Koppstoff*, Zaimoğlu provides us with what he alleges is an inside view into the lives of female Muslims, thus pretending to reveal authentic examples of Muslim life in Germany, and grasping a chance to tell the German public what Muslim life in Germany is really like.

The second explanation for differences in popularity is related to questions of style. Because of their relative invisibility, German transcultural writers have been (at least until recently) free to be innovative in linguistic and textual terms, to produce literature which is 'different', 'difficult', and challenging. It seems that an 'easy' style and an accessible subject matter ensure commercial success. The English-

²³ See subtitle of *Kanak Sprak: Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft*.

²⁴ There is an exception: Imran Ayata's *Hürriyet Love Express: Storys* (KiWi, 880 (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2005)). These stories' quality and relevance for the youngest generation of German Turks is, however, questionable. The decreasing interest in 'radical difference' could also be an indication for an oversaturation of *Kanak*-like stories and a demand for more traditional genres, for example Rafik Schami's novel *Die dunkle Seite der Liebe* [*The Dark Side of Love*] (dtv, 13520 (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 2006 [2004])), which tells his pre-story of immigration from Syria to Germany.

²⁵ In an interview with Vera Gaserow, Zaimoğlu even proclaims an 'ethno-avantgarde', which mainly consists of 'young, self-aware neo-Muslima' ('Es gibt eine Ethno-Avantgarde', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 02 May 2007 <http://www.fr-online.de/_inc/_globals/print.php?sid=3c2e2cb255acc9acf215774a0cal.html> [accessed 02 May 2007] (para. 15 of 21)).

language texts of this thesis tend to be more mainstream, particularly in terms of style and language, and hence more popular, even beyond the national boundaries of Britain.²⁶

However, some recent publications by British transcultural writers have shown a more innovative side than in current German post-migration writing, despite the danger of reduced accessibility (these publications have been commercially less successful than more mainstream novels such as *Brick Lane*). The pushing of linguistic boundaries such as 'Kanak Sprak' or Emine Sevgi Özdamar's German-language writing was a phenomenon of the 1990s in Germany, yet something similar has only recently emerged in British transcultural writing. Examples are Suhayl Saadi's *Psychoraag* (2004) and Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani* (2006).²⁷ One explanation for the recent growth of linguistically innovative English-language writing might be a further removal from the experience of Empire: these writers seem to feel more liberated from the constraints of language than their parents and no longer have to prove that they are 'properly' British. Most German-language writers have never had an urge to 'become' German writers in the same way as a number of British writers of non-British descent had previously and could therefore re-appropriate language in a more creative way earlier.²⁸

Saadi's novel *Psychoraag* is written from the perspective of a Scottish Muslim whose parents came from Pakistan.²⁹ This is also an experience Saadi discusses in his essays, speeches, poetry, and short stories:³⁰ the notion of identity, of being Scottish and Muslim, is seen as a question of choice. Saadi defines himself as a

²⁶ We should not forget the immense popularity of films with a multicultural subject matter. The scope of this thesis does not allow me to go into detail here. Some of the texts in this thesis have been turned into films, thus capturing an audience that might not receive these texts otherwise: *Kanak Attack* (2000) based on Zaimoğlu's novel *Abschaum* (1997), and *My Son the Fanatic* (1997) based on Hanif Kureishi's short story of the same title. *Brick Lane*, whose filming has caused much controversy, is also turned into a film (see Richard Lea and Paul Lewis, 'Local Protests over Brick Lane Film', *Guardian*, 17 July 2006 <<http://books.guardian.co.uk/news/articles/0,,1822739,00.html>> [accessed 22 July 2007] (14 para.)).

²⁷ I cannot go into detail with *Londonstani* (London: Fourth Estate, 2006). However, with its radical language, focus on masculinity (gang culture, subculture, drugs, sexuality, consumerism), it is reminiscent of Zaimoğlu's radical and innovative texts of the mid-1990s.

²⁸ See "Ich bin Teil der deutschen Literatur, so deutsch wie Kafka": Ist Fremd-Sein ein Problem, ein Thema oder ein Markt-Vorteil? Vier nicht ganz deutsche Autoren – Terézia Mora, Imran Ayata, Wladimir Kaminer und Navid Kermani – im Literaturen-Gespräch', *Literaturen*, 4/2005, pp. 26-31.

²⁹ Suhayl Saadi, *Psychoraag* (Edinburgh: CHROMA, 2005 [2004]).

³⁰ See, for example, Saadi's collection of short stories *The Burning Mirror* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2000 [2003 printing]).

Scottish writer.³¹ This puts him in critical opposition to mainstream post-migrant writers from London who have enjoyed an Oxbridge education and write in standard English, whilst clearly keeping an eye on the market.³² *Psychoraag* is a postcolonial and post-migrant novel in line with texts discussed in this thesis: it thematizes migration and its consequences for the migrants' children, which includes a consideration of generational issues; it subverts language by combining Punjabi, Arabic, standard English, and Glaswegian dialect artistically, which necessitates a glossary for the mono-lingual reader.³³ Saadi's choice of language demonstrates his engagement with the various sides of his identity as an English-language writer with a Scottish Muslim identity.

Saadi's work focuses on borders and breakages, on the transitional space between Lahore and Glasgow, between his characters' ancestors and their present. This entails an exploration of their and their parents' Indo-Pakistani history (including culture and religion) in relation to their current situation which has been shaped by (post-)migratory experiences: the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 and the ongoing conflict in Kashmir have intensified the experience of being a migrant, and left younger generations with a difficult and continuous inheritance. Saadi reveals close links between migration and family, their dreams and disappointments, values and the reality they had to face when arriving in a new country. Furthermore, the recurring theme of relationships to women in connection with 'race' make the reader aware of identity issues on a personal level. The fact that the narrator of *Psychoraag* refers to Scotland with its Latin/Gaelic name, 'Alba, the land of whiteness' (p. 213), makes the challenges of an 'other' Scottish identity apparent. 'Race' becomes part of performativity, of performing one's identity as a Muslim or a white person. It is this interaction between place, race, and language in his work that shapes Saadi's self-portrayal as a Scottish Muslim writer.

³¹ Suhayl Saadi, 'Being Scottish' <http://sarmed.netfirms.com/suhayl/NEW/articles_essays/being_scottish/index.htm> [accessed 21 July 2006] (5 para.).

³² Suhayl Saadi, 'Psychoraag: An Interview', with Nick Mitchell <<http://www.spikemagazine.com/0406-suhayl-saadi-psychoraag-interview.php>> [accessed 21 July 2006] (para. 29-31 of 43).

³³ Saadi re-appropriates a technique typically employed by early postcolonial writers such as Chinua Achebe here. In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin point out that 'such glosses foreground the continual reality of cultural distance' (p. 61). In his text, Saadi also examines a void between cultures (p. 63), yet turns this void into a significant moulder of his Scottish Muslim identity.

These observations lead me to conclude that there is still mainly a voyeuristic interest in Muslim issues, which suggests that easily accessible styles and non-challenging contents make literature about Islam popular. This is also underlined by the way in which post-migrant texts are discussed in the media: the similar vocabulary ('Oriental', 'colourful', etc.) in literary supplements is proof of a reluctance to accept what is now a transcultural reality.³⁴ One could think that the publishing strategies and the literature supply are meant to meet the public's taste. I believe, however, that, vice versa, they largely determine the audience's interests. Yet this can also have positive effects: for example, Kiepenheuer & Witsch re-published Özdamar's texts *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*, *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*, and *Seltsame Sterne starren zur Erde* in one volume as *Sonne auf halbem Weg: Die Istanbul-Berlin-Trilogie* [*Sun Halfway: The Istanbul-Berlin-Trilogy*] in 2006.³⁵ With this publication, Özdamar is now likely to be perceived beyond academia and a literary elite (she has won numerous prizes after all³⁶). However, the trilogy-title is clearly designed for the market: it guides the reader into believing that Özdamar's protagonists will explore the *in-between* of migrants between Turkey and Germany, a position which the writer challenges.³⁷ That shows that the idea of separate cultures continues to determine the public's view on (post-)migrants, an attitude which is no longer suitable in a transcultural reality.

It follows that the question of the definition of the Self in the light of the Other in a multicultural society is still widely relevant: the Other remains our main point of identification, and Islam seems to be the quintessential Other in a post-'9/11' Western world. Yet most of the writers discussed in this thesis make clear that – as

³⁴ Yasemin Dayıoğlu-Yücel has analysed Orientalizing reviews in the section "Tausendundeine Geschichten: Die Karawanserei im Spiegel der Presse", in *Von der Gastarbeit zur Identitätsarbeit: Integritätsverhandlungen in türkisch-deutschen Texten von Şenocak, Özdamar, Ağaoğlu und der Online Community vabee!*, Universitätsdrucke Göttingen 2005 (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2005), pp. 28-33.

³⁵ Emine Sevgi Özdamar, *Sonne auf halbem Weg: Die Istanbul-Berlin-Trilogie* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2006).

³⁶ For example, Ingeborg Bachmann Prize (1991), Adelbert von Chamisso Prize (1999), Kleist Prize (2004).

³⁷ Another example of a republication which meets a public post-'9/11' interest in Islam is Kathleen Jamie's *Among Muslims: Meetings at the Frontiers of Pakistan* (London: Sort of Books, 2002 [2003 printing]). It was originally published as *The Golden Peak* (London: Virago, 1992). The new title reminds the reader of V.S. Naipaul's *Among the Believers*, thus promising an inside view into 'real' Muslim life, which, as we have seen, is not possible for most Western travel writers.

Jamal Tuschick notices – ‘Migration bleibt ein Dauerzustand’.³⁸ They highlight the changing nature of Islam and its believers, its trans-European outlook, and thus keep challenging our perceptions of Islam, a religion which is visibly shaping the face of Europe more than ever.

³⁸³⁸ Jamal Tuschick, ‘Nachwort von Jamal Tuschik: Träger von Zukunftsinformationen’, in *Morgen Land: Neueste deutsche Literatur*, ed. by Jamal Tuschick, Fischer, 14755 (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), pp. 283-91 (p. 290): ‘migration remains a constant state’.

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Appendix I

An Interview with Ilija Trojanow¹

This interview took place prior to Ilija Trojanow's reading at the Goethe Institute Glasgow, 14 November 2006. Trojanow promoted his then latest publication *Der Weltensammler* [*The Collector of Worlds*] (2006).

Frauke Matthes: In meiner Dissertation beschäftige ich mich auch mit so genannter 'Migrationsliteratur'. Sie werden oft in diesem Kontext gelesen, und Sie sind auch Träger des Adelbert-von-Chamisso-Preises. [Dieser Preis wird an deutschsprachige Schriftsteller nichtdeutscher Herkunft von der Robert-Bosch-Stiftung vergeben.] Was halten Sie von der Bezeichnung 'Migrationsliteratur'? Empfinden Sie ihn als eine Diskriminierung anderer Art oder Ausgrenzung, wie dies andere Schriftsteller, die diesen Preis bekommen haben empfunden haben, oder ist Literaturpreis gleich Literaturpreis?

¹ A short version of this interview was published as 'Die Fremde muss wie ein Stein sein', *Kreuzer*, 1/2007, 57.

I have slightly edited the interview, mainly in terms of grammar, occasionally in terms of choice of words, to ensure its readability. I have also left some of Trojanow's less significant and – for the purpose of this thesis – irrelevant comments and short sentence fragments as well as fillers out. I have added some explanatory comments in brackets for clarification, without explicitly noting 'F.M.'. I have also slightly edited the translation of this interview, which follows the German text.

Ilija Trojanow: Soweit ich weiß, hat noch keiner den Preis abgelehnt, insofern sind auch die, die sich darüber ein bisschen mockieren, durchaus froh, ihn zu bekommen. Also kann da die Ablehnung nicht besonders profund sein.

Es ist eine Krücke. Jede Bezeichnung ist eine Krücke. Wenn man sich dessen bewusst ist und es nicht zu überbewertet, dann hilft es einem vielleicht ein bisschen, etwas einzuordnen. Ich bin nicht jemand, der das Bedürfnis hat, irgendetwas einzuordnen. Insofern benutze ich den Begriff selber nie. Aber ich verstehe, dass Leute, die anders arbeiten, die eher im Sinne von Kategorien schaffen und Kategorien definieren arbeiten, hilfreich ist, irgendwelche Rubriken zu schaffen. Und da finde ich ihn immer noch viel besser als so etwas wie 'Ausländerliteratur'. Es ist wenigstens ein Begriff, der irgendwie auch den Inhalt der Literatur mitbedenkt, nämlich dass es um das Verschiebung von Stoffen und Themen geht und das Einführen von Themen in eine Literatur, die diese Themen bislang so nicht kannte, und dass aufgrund dieser Verschiebung auch auf der sprachlichen Ebene eine Migration erfolgt, so dass man der deutschen Sprache die Migration anmerkt. In dem Wort ['Migrationsliteratur'] klingt alles mit an, und insofern ist es nicht *so* schlimm.

F.M.: Inwieweit ist so eine Kategorisierung sinnvoll, oder ist Literatur, die auf Deutsch geschrieben wird, einfach Deutsche Literatur?

I.T.: Das ist sie ja auch nicht. Man könnte jeden Begriff auseinander nehmen, wenn man wollte. Man kann natürlich unglaublich gelassen darüber sein. Wie Naipaul, der sagt, ich bin ein englischer Autor. Das ist er natürlich nicht, aber man kann natürlich so tun, als würde das für einen keine Rolle spielen. Das ist das Egomane des Künstlers, weil man die eigene Reise, die so einzigartig ist, über alles andere stellt.

F.M.: Sie haben eben Sprache angesprochen. Was bedeutet die deutsche Sprache für Sie als Schriftsteller?

I.T.: Die bedeutet für uns alle – und ich kenne ja doch auch die meisten anderen Autoren [die den Adelbert-von-Chamisso-Preis bekommen haben] – erst einmal die wahre Heimat. Es gibt keine ehrlichere Heimat als die deutsche Sprache, weil die Sprache natürlich nicht ideologisch ist. Sie kann zwar ideologisch benutzt werden, ist aber nicht immanent ideologisch. Die Sprache ist viel toleranter gegenüber uns und viel mehr bereit, sich mit uns zu verschmelzen oder etwas Neues

zu schaffen, was auf jeden Fall mein Anspruch wäre. Mein Anspruch wäre, dass man der deutschen Sprache irgendwann mal, wenn ich dann im Grab liege oder verbrannt worden bin oder was auch immer, anmerkt, dass ich da war. Nicht weil ich, Ilija Trojanow, das möchte, sondern weil ich Repräsentant einer gewissen historischen Realität bin. In meinem Fall, dass hunderttausende von Osteuropäern in den Jahren des Kalten Krieges nach Deutschland kamen.

F.M.: Das wäre dann meine nächste Frage: Was ist dann Heimat? Ist sie konstruiert?

I.T.: Ja, natürlich ist das konstruiert, logisch. Das merkt man ja daran, dass er [der Begriff 'Heimat'] nur im Singular existiert. Also, Heimat ist kein interessanter Begriff für mich, weil ich glaube, dass Heimat jenseits der Fiktion und der Instrumentalisierungen so intim persönlich ist, dass Heimat nichts anderes ist, als eine Art emotionaler Fingerabdruck jedes Menschen. Und es ist mit Sicherheit so – davon ich bin völlig überzeugt –, dass Heimat mit den Menschen beginnt, die für einen wichtig sind, das heißt Familie, Umfeld, Freunde usw. Und wenn da schon ein gewisser Bruch da ist, zum Beispiel, dass die Familie aus einem anderen Teil von Deutschland kommt oder dass die Ehefrau aus einem anderen Land kommt usw., dann bricht das schon sofort alle möglichen Homogenisierungsdefinitionen. Und das Zweite ist, dass Heimat auch ein Ausdruck der biographischen Verbindungen ist, und wenn jemand eine Beziehung zu einem neuen Ort entwickelt, [...] dann ist irgendwann mal [dieser Ort] auch eine Heimat, fast schon notgedrungen. [Wir unterhielten uns vor dem Essen über meine Zeit in Schottland. Trojanow verweist hier darauf, dass, wenn ich in Schottland bliebe, mir auch dieses Land zur Heimat werden könnte.] Landschaft ähnlich. [Hier meint Trojanow, dass jemand, der, zum Beispiel, in den Highlands aufgewachsen ist, die einen umgebende Landschaft wohlmöglich nicht mehr wahrnehme, ein Tourist aber durchaus. Dennoch blieben die Highlands für die dort Aufgewachsenen ihre Heimat.] Wenn man genauer hinguckt, ist das nur ein riesengroßes Flimmern und insofern denke ich, nicht sehr nützlich, um irgendetwas auszusagen. Also benutze ich diesen Begriff eigentlich nicht.

F.M.: Was bedeutet Schreiben für Sie?

I.T.: Ich weiß nicht, ob ich dazu etwas besonders Originelles sagen haben. Schreiben ist Lebenssinn, Lebensinhalt, das, was ich am besten kann. Instrument der

Selbsterfüllung, Instrument der Weltveränderung. Ich glaube, ich unterscheide mich da nicht besonders von den meisten anderen Autoren.

F.M.: Wie sehen Sie das Verhältnis von Schreiben und Reisen?

I.T.: Das Verhältnis Schreiben zu Reisen ist wahrscheinlich ein spannenderes Feld, weil das bei mir, glaube ich, ein existentielles Verhältnis ist. Ich glaube, dass meine Poetologie sich auch aus dem Reisen heraus entwickelt. Und wie genau, da müsste man wahrscheinlich sehr, sehr ins Detail gehen. Aber grundsätzlich ist es so, glaube ich, dass eine bestimmte Art von Reisen auch eine bestimmte Art der Wahrnehmung bedingt, und eine bestimmte Art der Wahrnehmung auch einen bestimmten Stil zur Folge hat. Und insofern ist meine Art des Reisens – und da bin ich ja sehr eigen – ... Ich habe eine ganz bestimmte Vorstellung davon, was Reisen wirklich ist: Es ist nicht das geographische Verschlingen von Orten und Gegenden und Menschen, sondern das ist wirklich der Versuch einer kontinuierlichen Verschmelzung mit dem Jeweiligen. Es ist der Versuch, auch Fremde erst einmal zu finden. [...] Reisen bedeutet für die meisten Menschen ja, der Fremde zu entgehen und die ganze Fremdentgehungsindustrie [...], deswegen weil die Menschen eigentlich der Fremde entgehen wollen, ... Fremde erst einmal zu finden und dann die Fremde zu etwas Eigenem zu machen, ohne sie aber zu zerstören, zu zerstören nicht im Sinne von in der Realität, sondern für sich selbst zu zerstören, indem man sie zerbröckelt, indem man sie vereinfacht, indem man sie etikettiert, all diese Techniken des Aufdröselns von Fremde. Also, Elefanten schlucken Steine zur Verdauung. Und die Steine sind dann sehr wichtig, die mahlen das Essen, und dann irgendwann mal werden sie wieder ausgeschieden. Ich finde, die Fremde muss so wie ein Stein sein: Sie hilft dann einem, die Realität zu verdauen, aber andererseits muss sie auch schwer im Magen liegen. Denn wenn sie nicht schwer im Magen liegt, hat man es sich zu einfach gemacht oder hat sie, wie gesagt, zerstört. Und das ist eine lebenslange Suche, ein lebenslanges Kämpfen, um einen eigenen Weg, der sehr hybrid ist und bei dem das Reisen sozusagen das Gleitmittel ist oder die Rutsche oder wie auch immer, diese Hybridität zu füttern.

Es hat wahrscheinlich auch sehr stark mit meinem Konzept von Empathie zu tun. Mich interessiert nur eine Literatur, die in einem philosophischen Sinn empathisch ist. Deswegen lehne ich viele der anderen Reiseautoren ab, weil sie

meiner Ansicht nach zynisch sind in ihrem Umgang mit dem, was sie sehen. Diese Empathie ist natürlich fast ein spiritueller Begriff, weil man daran sehr oft scheitert und verzweifelt. Es ist wie so ein Ideal, dem man nacheifert, dem man dann aber immer wieder auch nicht gerecht wird. Und Empathie bedeutet natürlich auch – und das ist, glaube ich, im *Weltensammler*² das Thema des ganzen Buches – dieser Versuch, – und das ist für mich eigentlich das Schöne an Literatur – den Stimmlosen eine Stimme zu geben, also all denen, die übersehen worden sind. Mich langweilt auch Literatur sehr, wenn sie so aus den Zentren der Macht oder aus den Zentren der Erfahrung geschrieben ist, so typisches bürgerliches *commedy of manners*. Das hatten wir schon hunderttausend Mal, das ist für mich völlig uninteressant, also nur für mich persönlich. Aber so jemand, dem es gelingt einen Menschen – und das war mein Anspruch zumindest beim *Weltensammler* –, Menschen wie zum Beispiel Sidi Mubarak Bombay [Burton's afrikanischer Begleiter auf seinen Expeditionen in Ostafrika] zum Leben zu erwecken, die es gegeben hat, die wichtig waren, die aber einhundertfünfzig Jahre schon negiert worden sind, das ist erstens ein auch politisch-literarischer Anspruch von mir, aber zweites funktioniert auch der Weg dazu nur über Empathie. Und wenn es [im *Weltensammler*] gelungen ist, dann deswegen, weil ich mich in ihn [Sidi Mubarak Bombay] verliebt habe als Figur und weil er mir, glaube ich, unglaublich nahe stand in dem Moment, in dem er in mir und aus mir heraus gesprochen hat.

F.M.: Kann ich Sie zu dem Hadsch-Buch [*Zu den Heiligen Quellen des Islam: Als Pilger nach Mekka und Medina*] noch etwas fragen? [Trojanow erwähnte vor dem Gespräch, dass ihn abgeschlossene Bücher nur noch wenig tangieren.] Am Ende des Buches schreiben Sie, dass Sie durch das Schreiben die Reise noch einmal machen. Wie funktioniert das, wie ist das, und wie ist das Verhältnis von Schreiben und Reisen hier? Ist Schreiben Reisen? Ich finde, es ist ein sehr interessantes Konzept, dass man durch das Schreiben eine Reise noch mal erlebt, die Orte noch mal erfühlt.

I.T.: Es ist bei der Hadsch so, dass man die Ergriffenheit, die man dort spürt und diese Momente, ein Gefühl der Erhöhung und Reinigung, sehr schnell verliert,

² Trojanows Roman *Der Weltensammler* handelt von Sir Richard Francis Burtons Zeit in Britisch-Indien, Arabien und Ostafrika. Er wird aus mehreren Perspektiven – Burtons und der eines Einheimischen aus der jeweiligen Region – erzählt.

und das ist, glaube ich, der Schmerz, also wenn Menschen – und ich benutze absichtlich den Begriff ‘Menschen’ und nicht ‘Gläubige’, weil eine der ganz häufigen Fehlvorstellungen ist, dass die Leute, die auf der Hadsch sind, alle Gläubige sind – ... Es ist natürlich eine religiöse Tradition, es ist aber auch eine kulturelle Tradition, das heißt, man sieht sehr viele Leute, die mit gewissen grundsätzlichen Ritualen fast Schwierigkeiten haben, weil sie im Alltag nicht besonders strenggläubig leben. Ich hatte, glaube ich, drei Mal das Gespräch mit irgendwelchen Leuten, die dann gefragt haben: ‘Na, wie ist das denn eigentlich im Alltag? Betest Du überhaupt fünf Mal?’ Und dann alle so: ‘Na [nein], natürlich nicht!’ Das heißt, das sind auch Leute, die nicht ein strengreligiöses Leben führen, die auf der Pilgerfahrt spirituell in irgendeiner Weise berührt worden sind. Diese Berührung ist, glaube ich, für alle, mit denen ich gesprochen habe, und für mich selber auch, sehr schön, aber sie geht unglaublich schnell verloren. Sie geht erschreckend schnell verloren, so dass man dann beginnt, sich zu fragen, was ist eigentlich der Sinn des Ganzen, wenn es wirklich ... das ist sozusagen die große Lebensaufgabe eines Moslem [Trojanow benutzt den Begriff ‘Moslem’, nicht ‘Muslim’], aber wenn man das so schnell verliert, wenn es einen nicht wirklich dann fürs Leben verändert, dann stimmt irgendetwas nicht an dem Konzept. Die Idee wäre ja sozusagen, dass man als anderer Mensch dann den Rest seines Lebens verbringt, und da war es eine richtige Beglückung, dass ich aus dieser Phase des Zweifels und der Verlustgehung zurückkehren konnte und noch einmal dieses ganze Erlebnis der Ekstase, der Überraschung, der Erfüllung, alle diese Elemente noch einmal schreibend erleben konnte. Was ich bewusst gemacht habe bei dem Buch, ist, mir meine Unschuld zu reimaginieren. Ich habe bewusst versucht, das Buch nicht zu schreiben aus dem Blickpunkt desjenigen, der ich war, als ich das geschrieben habe, sondern mir diese teilweise unwissende oder nur halbwissende Offenheit und Neugierde, mit denen ich das Ganze begangen habe, zu vergegenwärtigen. Und beim Schreiben hatte ich teilweise wirklich dieses, also auch emotional sozusagen, *déjà vu*-Erlebnis. Das war wirklich so eine Folie, die sich darüberschob, und das war sehr nützlich. Ich habe dann einem meiner ulema[‘ulama’; Schriftgelehrte]-Brüder in Bombay scheinbar so überzeugt von meiner zweiten Hadsch geschrieben, wo ich schon erwähnt habe, dass ich das schreibe, aber scheinbar war das für ihn so überzeugend, dass er zurück

schrieb, ja, also er beglückwünscht mich zu meiner zweiten Hadsch und ich zurück, 'Nein, nein, ich war nicht auf Hadsch, ich habe ...

F.M.: Haben Sie das Gefühl, wenn sie *jetzt* das Buch oder ihre Notizen lesen, dass Sie die Hadsch noch einmal erleben können?

I.T.: Ich bin nicht noch mal zurückgekehrt, auch weil ich ein bisschen Angst hatte vor Enttäuschung. Ich hatte jetzt dies zwei wirklich wunderschönen Erlebnisse, also die Hadsch und ... Ach so, was dazukommt, ich habe das Buch so schnell geschrieben wie noch kein anderes Buch in meinem Leben. Das heißt, das hatte von den Rahmenbedingungen auch so etwas von der Hadsch. Ich hatte drei Monate, ich habe wirklich jeden Tag in den drei Monaten geschrieben (und das war genau die Hadsch-Zeit), und ich wollte am 31. Januar, glaube ich, fertig werden. Ich bin am 31. Januar fertig geworden. Und die Hadsch-Zeit war vorbei, und Eid war vorbei. Das hat das Ganze noch mal verstärkt, glaube ich. Ich habe das jetzt zwei Mal sehr intensiv erlebt, und ich möchte das irgendwie auch nicht banalisieren oder vielleicht überschatten, indem ich jetzt noch mal zurückkehre. Ich finde das ganz gut so.

F.M.: Reisen Sie mit einem Notizbuch?

I.T.: Ja, klar.

F.M.: Dieses Gefühl hatte ich nämlich in Ihrem Buch nicht, aber [...] ich behandle auch V.S. Naipaul in dem Kapitel meiner Doktorarbeit, in dem ihr Buch vorkommt. Bei ihm ist es ja ganz extrem: Er reist mit dem Notizbuch, und er hat ein ganz bestimmtes Ziel, wenn er mit Leuten spricht. Bei Ihnen hatte ich nicht dieses Gefühl.

I.T.: Das ist völlig richtig. Das sind, glaube ich, zwei völlig gegensätzliche Vorstellungen von was Schreiben ist, also in diesem Genre. Er [V.S. Naipaul] hat so einen Anspruch des Entlarvens. Er möchte ..., also er behauptet zwar, er würde zuhören, aber eigentlich hört man das, was er hören will, ganz, ganz stark. Das Problem bei den zwei – man müsste auch trennen, die drei Indien-Büchern [*An Area of Darkness*; *India: A Wounded Civilization*; *India: A Million Mutinies Now*] und die zwei Islam-Bücher [*Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* und *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples*], ich vermute, sie meinen vor allem die zwei Islam-Bücher ... Bei den zwei Islam-Büchern ist es so, dass er da ja auch schon ziemlich, na ja, alt nicht, aber sagen wir mal fortgeschrittenen Alters ist,

ein weltberühmter Autor. Ich weiß von einem Freund, zum Beispiel, dass er in Karachi richtig im Hotel saß, und dann ließ er die Leute zu sich ins Hotel kommen. Das ist ein bisschen problematisch, schon als Rechercheansatz. Er hat, und seine – das merkt man ganz klar an seinen Adepten, also an den jungen Indern, die ihn verehren – er hat so eine Art, aufgrund eines übersteigerten Selbstwertgefühls, des Intellekts, also er glaubt, dass man mit Intellekt alles machen kann, was ich in Frage stellen würde. Ich würde ja sagen, man braucht genauso gut Werte wie Instinkt, Einfühlungsvermögen, emotionale Offenheit, solche Komponenten. Er neigt dazu, die Realität zu interpretieren, schon beim Sehen. Stilistisch merkt man das klar an so Sachen wie: 'Er war ein Mann von soundso, der das und das dachte, der das und das hoffte, der das und das und das wünschte.' Wo mir immer die Kinnlade herunterfällt, so genau könnte ich es nicht einmal über mich selber sagen, geschweige denn über einen Menschen, den ich gerade getroffen habe, nach zehn Minuten schon so ein polizeitechnisches Portrait dieses Menschen. Das liegt natürlich daran, dass er wirklich glaubt, dass er mit seinem Intellekt, aufgrund seiner Beobachtungen, aufgrund der Sprache des Menschen, aufgrund seiner – was weiß ich – seiner Physiognomie, seiner Gestik usw., etwas Besonderes sagen kann. Das macht zum Beispiel Pankaj Mishra auch ganz stark. Ich finde das ganz, ganz problematisch. Ich versuche eigentlich, als Ego nicht vorzukommen in meinen Büchern. Das misslingt natürlich manchmal, logisch. Aber ich versuche, sozusagen die Tatsache, dass ich einen ganz eigenen persönlichen, begrenzten, schiefen Blick auf die Realität habe, möglichst aufzubrechen. Natürlich wird ein Erkenntnistheoretiker sagen, ich bin nicht mehr als ich selber usw. Ganz klar. Aber trotzdem kann man zum Beispiel das stilistisch leicht verhindern, indem man keine subjektiven Beobachtungen hereinbringt, nichts auf die Leute projiziert und indem man sie nicht, weder die Leute noch irgendwelche Realitäten, verurteilt.

Ich habe mich einmal mit Günter Grass beschäftigt, in so einem Essay. Das ist meine Auseinandersetzung mit *Zunge zeigen* [Grass' Reisebuch über seinen Indienaufenthalt 1986-1987]. Bei Grass, bei *Zunge zeigen*, ist es ja ähnlich, auch [bei Pier Paolo] Pasolini, *Der Geruch von Indien*, ich glaube *L'odore dell'India* heißt es auf Italienisch. Es ist so *The King of all Eye*, also der große westliche Intellektuelle, der sich wie so ein Leuchtturm in der Dunkelheit der Dritten Welt aufrichtet, und

sein Intellekt ist so ein Scheinwerfer, der diesen Sumpf von Aberglaube und Ineffizienz und Gestank und Kot und Dummheit und usw. usf., alles irgendwie durchleuchtet und sieht, das ist eigentlich alles Scheiße und sozusagen schlechte Noten verteilt und dann wieder davonfliegt. Und interessanterweise – was mich fasziniert hat, wieso ich's gemacht habe – ist, dass das bei den so genannten 'Linken' genauso funktioniert: Bei Naipaul weiß man ja, dass er sehr konservativ ist, sehr reaktionär von seinen Wertigkeiten, aber bei den so genannten 'Linken', also Pasolini (lebenslanger überzeugter Marxist), Günter Grass (gewerkschaftlicher Sozialdemokrat), bei denen ist es genauso, diese neoimperiale Geste ist ...

Das Problem ist, finde ich, bei den Naipaul-Büchern, dass er von einer völlig falschen Prämisse ausgeht, die wirklich beweisbar absolut völliger Unfug ist: nämlich dass der Islam die vor ihm herrschenden Kulturen völlig weggewischt hat, das ist völliger Unfug. Jeder, der sich auskennt, schüttelt da nur den Kopf und sagt, also das ist so was von stupide, dass man sich fragt, wie ist er denn darauf gekommen. Was aber nicht stimmt. Selbst in einem Land, wie zum Beispiel Iran, wo Islam immer sehr, sehr zentralistisch gewesen ist, wo es bei den Shia, im Gegensatz zu den Sunni, eine richtige *clergy* gibt. Insofern war die Durchdringung des Alltags mit der Kultur dort viel stärker als in Sunni-Ländern, also selbst da wimmelt es von vor..., angefangen mit dem Neujahr *Norouz*, was so ein zoroastrisches Ding ist, bis hin zu den Ringer-Schulen und Gedichten usw., also es wimmelt von präislamischen kulturellen Elementen, Momenten, die weiterhin erhalten sind ...

Ganz Indien ist eine einzige Widerlegung dieser Theorie; in Indien ist fast alles synkretistisch. Jetzt in neueren Zeiten ändert sich das. Die große Tragödie unserer Zeit ist ja nicht der schwachsinnige 'Kampf gegen Terror', der eher so eine Rechtfertigung für zunehmende diktatorische Entwicklungen und Tendenzen in der westlichen Demokratie ist. Sondern das wirklich Schreckliche ist die Zerstörung der sufistischen Zwischenwelten. Das kann man zum Beispiel in Pakistan sehr dramatisch und sehr gut miterleben. Die gesamte islamische Kultur in Ländern wie Pakistan basiert auf dem Sufismus: Jenseits des Sufismus gibt es nichts, die gesamte Musik, die gesamte Dichtung, Tanz, Kleidung, alles. Und diese Dogmatiker, ob das Wahabi oder Deobandi oder wie auch immer sind, versuchen, den Sufismus zu zerstören, teilweise auch mit gewalttätigen Mitteln; es gibt wirklich auch Kämpfe,

und es werden auch Leute umgebracht. In der Machtzentrale in North-West Province haben sie ja inzwischen auch Musik verboten. Das ist eine wirkliche Katastrophe, denn es ist so, als würde man wirklich das Rückenmark, das kulturelle Rückenmark aus dem Islam saugen, weil dann einfach eine völlig tote Ideologie, die meiner Ansicht nach dann überhaupt keinen Wert mehr hat, übrig bleibt. Und insofern ist wer mit so einer Prämisse anfängt und dann versucht dreihundert Seiten lang, eine falsche Prämisse zu beweisen, extrem problematisch.

F.M.: Es ist ja auch interessant, was Naipaul als 'authentisch' bezeichnet. Für ihn sind alle, die nicht aus dem arabischen Raum stammen, Konvertiten. Er reist *Among the Converted Peoples* [Untertitel des zweiten 'Islam-Buches' *Beyond Belief*]. Was halten Sie davon? Ich halte es für ein sehr problematisches Konzept, dass die, die nicht aus dem arabischen Raum kommen, keine 'echten' Muslime sind.

I.T.: Das ist eine extrem merkwürdige Prämisse. Ich glaube, ich weiß, woher sie kommt. Er steht in Indien der BJP [*Bharatiya Janajta Party*, dt. 'Indische Volkspartei', Indiens größte Partei, rechtskonservativ und hindu-nationalistisch] und den *Hindutvawallahs* [Unterstützer des Hindu-Nationalismus bzw. politisierten Hinduismus (*Hindutva*)] sehr nahe. [...] Die Ideologie der ganzen *Hindutva* basiert darauf, dass die Muslime Indiens keine ..., also dass es zwei Möglichkeiten gibt: Entweder sind sie keine wirklichen Muslime, oder sie sind keine wirklichen Inder, aber dass es das eigentlich nicht geben kann, das Moslemische im Land. Deswegen ist die Forderung der *Hindutva*, dass sie zugestehen, dass Indien eine Hindu-Nation ist und dass der Hinduismus unendlich viele Abarten und Variationen erlaubt, zum Beispiel auch, dass es solche Traditionen gibt, dass Mohammed das zehnte *Avatar* [Reinkarnation] von Vishnu ist usw. usf. Und die [Muslime] sollen sozusagen in den Schoß der Hindu-Familie kommen; sie haben irgendwie eine merkwürdige Sekte [...] oder die sollen verschwinden. Das ist ungefähr so, ganz grob gesagt. Und das, glaube ich, hat wirklich seinen [Naipauls] strukturellen Blick verformt. Es ist aus zwei Gründen absurd: Erstens die Zukunft des Islams liegt nur in der Hand der so genannten 'Konvertiten'. Die arabischen Länder sind so was von kulturell am Boden zerstört; das sind für mich die kaputttesten Länder, die ich kenne. Ich war dieses Jahr drei Wochen in Bahrain, ich war in Saudi Arabien, viel schlimmer kann ich mir eine Gesellschaft nicht vorstellen. Das sind Gesellschaften, die aufgrund des schnellsten

Fortschrittes, technisch und wirtschaftlich, den es jemals gegeben hat irgendwo auf der Welt, ihren eigenen kulturellen Traditionen völlig entfremdet sind. Sie sind eine Sklavenhaltergesellschaft: In Dubai sind 80%, in Bahrain 50% Fremdarbeiter, die wirklich oft wie Sklaven gehalten werden, bzw. selbst wenn sie ganz gut Geld verdienen, keine Rechte haben, das heißt eine wirkliche Ghettoisierung der arbeitenden Bevölkerung. Sie sind völlig, durch und durch korrupt, eigentlich haben sie nur Interesse an westlichen Konsumgütern, was sich wiederum nicht mit der Wahabi-Ideologie in die Haare gerät, erstaunlicherweise. Es ist einfach wirklich eine Gesellschaft in der Krise. Denn die Gesellschaften, die nicht in der Krise sind, das sind Indonesien, Indien, das sind Gesellschaften, wo noch wirklich unglaublich viel, ja Vielfalt, Dynamik, kulturelle Ausdrucksformen, also im Islam, am Rande des Islams, auch außerhalb des Islams, täglich stattfinden. Insofern ist die Zukunft des Islams bei den 'Konvertiten'. Das ist der erste Punkt wieso, glaube ich, sein [Naipauls] Blick irgendwie falsch ist. Und der zweite ist, dass ich glaube, dass das Konvertieren nicht in die religiösen Gene des Menschen hineingeht. Es ist nicht so, dass ich, weil vor tausend Jahren mein Ururururgroßvater konvertiert ist, deswegen immer, jetzt heute noch eine bestimmte Mentalität und eine bestimmte Haltung, also einen bestimmten *mindset* eines Konvertiten habe. Das würde ich Leuten zugestehen, die selber konvertiert sind, aber nicht nach tausend Jahren, das halte ich für völlig absurd. Ich habe auch nie etwas in meinem Leben gesehen, was das unterstützen würde; im Gegenteil, was passiert ist, dass ja solche Gesellschaften sich dann eigene Mythen entwickeln, und zum Beispiel sind die indischen Moslems ganz stolz darauf, dass Adam in Nordindien war, und dann ging er nach Sri Lanka usw., das heißt, Mythen werden ja auch verpflanzt, deswegen der enorme Erfolg des Sufismus, und der Sufismus ist der *interface* des Islam, wo es ständig kulturelle Adaptionen gibt und wo örtliche Heilige geschaffen werden. Und das kapiert Naipaul überhaupt nicht. Er kapiert sozusagen nicht die ganze Dynamik der sufistischen Kultur und Spiritualität, das kapiert er nicht. Das kommt bei ihm auch überhaupt nicht vor, und wenn sie [die sufistische Spiritualität] vorkommt, dann völlig missverstanden. Er ist, glaube ich, auch zu sehr rein rationell eingestellt.

F.M.: Er versucht auch, diese 'Muslim rage' und 'Fundamentalismus' und wie er entsteht, zu erklären. Und er erklärt das ja alles über dieses 'Unechte' ...

I.T.: Ja, ja, völliger Schmar. Indonesier sind ja extrem freundlich und zurückhaltend, also überhaupt nicht *ragy* [*sic*]. Der Massenmord war nicht islamisch, sondern war kapitalistisch gegen kommunistisch. Das machen diese ganzen Autoren, das ist so was von widerlich, weil es unehrlich ist, die tun dann immer Indonesien mit rein: 'Naja, und die Gewalttätigkeit des Moslem, indonesischer Bürgerkrieg', der zwar wirklich grauenvoll war, nur, es hat überhaupt nichts mit dem Islam zu tun, sondern mit Hilfe der USA hat der Diktator die kommunistische Partei und all ihre Anhänger niedermetzeln lassen, also das hat wirklich rein überhaupt nichts mit dem Islam zu tun.

F.M.: Eine ganz praktische Frage: Für wen schreiben Sie? Diese Frage wird mir oft gestellt, wenn ich über ihr Buch spreche. Was für ein Publikum haben sie im Auge, oder haben sie eins im Auge?

I.T.: Niemals. Jeder der lesen kann.

F.M.: Wie ist das Hadsch-Buch aufgenommen worden?

I.T.: Es hat sich nicht sehr gut verkauft. Wir haben verkauft ..., also jetzt dürften wir irgendwo bei fünftausend sein oder so. Also ...

F.M.: Was, denken Sie, sind die Gründe dafür?

I.T.: Ich glaube, das [Buch] ist ein Blick – was Sie sozusagen vielleicht mir ihrer Frage auch andeuten – zwischen allen Stühlen. Wahrscheinlich suchen die ganz fest Gläubigen eher Bücher der Anleitung. Da gibt es ja sehr viele: Tag eins dahingehen, dieses Gebet sprechen usw. Wobei alle, die es bisher gelesen oder gehört haben, sehr, sehr berührt waren. Ich habe jetzt bei Lesungen – da sind auch immer wieder ein paar Moslems da – ... Wirklich alle kommen und sagen, das hat sehr meinen Erfahrungen entsprochen, hat mich sehr berührt, weil ich es sehr schön fand. Ich habe auch ein paar Mal in Moscheen gelesen, da waren auch die Resonanzen sehr gut. Also es liegt nicht daran, dass das Buch sie [die Muslime] irgendwie verfremdet oder abstößt. Aber ich glaube, dass unter diesen Leuten solche Bücher nicht gesucht werden. Die suchen, wenn überhaupt, eher pragmatische Bücher. Und bei den normalen Deutschen ist es, glaube ich, zu wenig distanziert. Die Stärke des Buches ist auch die Schwäche des Buches. Und dann gab es ja ein paar böse Rezensionen, meiner Ansicht nach völlig ungerechtfertigt ..., dass ich irgendwie den Islam schönreden würde irgendwie sowas. Da sieht man, wie unglaublich

brainwashed die Leute inzwischen sind, also dass sie überhaupt nicht erkennen, was Absicht eines Buches ist, das ist nämlich überhaupt nicht, über Islam zu reden, sondern, ein Gefühl zu geben, was die Hadsch bedeutet, nicht mehr und nicht weniger.

F.M.: War das auch die Motivation, dieses Buch zu schreiben?

I.T.: Ja, ja. Ich wollte das Buch eigentlich gar nicht schreiben, aber dann habe ich mit meinem Verleger ein Abendessen gehabt und habe das ganze Abendessen lang wirklich *non stop* über die Hadsch erzählt, und danach meinte er: 'Du, das ist wirklich so unglaublich spannend. Ich möchte das lesen, und wenn ich das lesen möchte, dann möchten das wahrscheinlich auch ein paar andere Leute lesen, und schreib das doch bitte auf.' Ich hatte eigentlich ursprünglich überhaupt nicht vor, das ... Insofern, weil sie gefragt haben, so Notizbuch und so: Ich habe zum Beispiel jetzt relativ wenige Gespräche aufgeschrieben, wie ich das machen würde, wenn ich jetzt reise und recherchiere für einen Essay oder Reportage oder Buch, da würde ich wirklich wichtige Gesprächsausschnitte protokollieren. Das habe ich da [auf der Hadsch] nicht gemacht. Ich weiß nicht, ob das schlecht ist. Man hat keine Distanz zum eigenen Buch, aber ich glaube, das ganze Buch hat ein bisschen von etwas Traumhaften. Es ist irgendwie nicht sehr im Pragmatischen verwurzelt; und das ist vielleicht nicht schlecht, vielleicht wäre es sonst zu reportagemäßig geworden.

F.M.: Aber es scheint mir ja jetzt eher schon ein recht allgemeines Interesse am Islam vorhanden zu sein. [**I.T.:** Ja.] Es ist dann interessant, dass das Buch nicht ...

I.T.: Naja, ich weiß nicht, ob das Interesse wirklich vorhanden ist, das würde ich in Frage stellen. Also zum Beispiel beim *Weltensammler* sagen alle, abgesehen von zwei Leuten, die mir geschrieben haben oder die mich ansprechen nach Lesungen, und das sind inzwischen ziemlich viele, es sagen alle, das erste ['Britisch-Indien'] und das dritte Kapitel ['Ostafrika'] hat ihnen am besten gefallen. Es kann jetzt natürlich sein, dass das zweite ['Arabien'] literarisch abfällt; das kann ich nicht beurteilen. Aber wenn dem so nicht sein sollte, dann ist die andere Erklärung natürlich, dass man zwar täglich das [Islam] in der Presse hört, aber irgendwie nicht wirklich, und vielleicht gibt's auch ein Bedürfnis, oder gab es eins unter gebildeten Menschen, sich eine Grundbildung über den Islam zu verschaffen. Deswegen wurden

einige Jahre nach '9/11' der Qur'an gut verkauft und Einführungen usw., aber ich glaube, das endet dann auch.

F.M.: Könnte das Buch zu einem anderen, besseren Verständnis für den Islam beitragen?

I.T.: Ja, klar. Das versucht es, aber, wenn Sie natürlich nur fünftausend Stück verkaufen, dann erreicht das nicht so viele Leute.

F.M.: Was ich auch noch sehr interessant finde, auch in Rezensionen, wie oft noch mit solchen orientalistischen Begriffen umgegangen wird, auch im Zusammenhang mit dem *Weltensammler*. Da wird dann von 'orientalischer Erzählweise' geschrieben. Da stellen sich mir immer ein bisschen die Nackenhaare auf ...

I.T.: Ja, und vor allem haben die Leute einfach keine Ahnung, und sie wollen auch nicht lernen. Ich bin es inzwischen leid, also inzwischen erzähle ich niemandem nichts, ich bin es wirklich nach zwanzig Jahren leid, gegen Vorurteile, Klischees, gegen Ignoranz anzukämpfen, weil das hier rein und da raus geht. Ich erzähle denen, dass orientalische Fabulierlust nicht existiert, im Gegenteil, diese Werke, die sie meinen, zum Beispiel *Tausendundeine Nacht*, sind absolut postmodern. Es gibt kaum ein Buch, das so sehr dem Ideal eines postmodernen Romans entspricht mit den ganzen Verschiebungen, Verschachtelungen, also wirklich so John-Barth-mäßig, die Geschichte in der Geschichte in der Geschichte in der Geschichte, die Brechungen, die Sprünge, also es ist alles Mögliche, aber überhaupt nicht unschuldig-märchenhaft heruntererzählt. Und die anderen, *Panja Tantra*, zum Beispiel, das ist ein indisches Buch, [...], genauso, also es sind Bücher, die überhaupt nicht passen in diese Vorstellung von ... Also woher kommt diese orientalische Fabulierlust? Ich weiß es nicht, denn wir haben das genauso: Wir haben am Anfang unserer Literatur *Don Quijote*, wir haben Boccaccio, wir haben die *Canterbury Tales*, die sind von der Struktur her ähnlich, es ist teilweise übernommen worden von arabischen Texten, genauso prall erzählt, im Gegenteil Boccaccio ist viel praller als *Tausendundeine Nacht*.

F.M.: Ich würde jetzt gern auf die Reise zurückkommen. Reise als Lernprozess ist auch ein muslimisches Thema. Ist Reisen auch Lernen? War die Hadsch ein Lernprozess für Sie? Sie sprechen ja auch mit ganz vielen Leuten und

beschreiben das Beten mit anderen Leuten, wie Sie lernen. Was bedeutet Reisen als Lernen, als Lernprozess?

I.T.: Jede Reise, bei der man nichts gelernt hat, ist eine vergeudete Reise. Auf einer Pilgerreise würde man natürlich im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes lernen, nämlich Öffnen des Bewusstseins und Erweitern des Bewusstseins. Ich denke mir, die Stärke einer Pilgerreise wie der Hadsch ist ja, dass man mit anderen zusammenlebt und lernt. Überhaupt ist, glaube ich, so als zentraler Begriff für die Hadsch für mich die Umma, also die Gemeinschaft. Es gibt Gemeinschaft, das ist sozusagen auf mehreren Ebenen: Es gibt die Gemeinschaft der eigenen Reisegruppe, innerhalb der man teilweise sehr ernste Gespräche, sehr intensive Gespräche führt, auch weil es sehr viel Leerlauf gibt, also man sitzt rum, und manche spielen auf ihrem Handy, aber andere unterhalten sich. Dann gibt es die Gemeinschaft, die jeweils um einen herum ist, also beim Gebet, bei Steinigungen, bei Arafat, bei jedem Schritt auf der Hadsch gibt es eine sich jeweils konstituierende Menge. Da habe ich ein Beispiel im Buch, wie ich diesen alten Mann aus Pakistan, mit dem ich dann einmal eine Umrundung zusammen gemacht habe, umarme; wir haben uns gegenseitig umarmt, sind einmal um die Ka'ba gezogen. Das ist etwas, was man lernt, wirklich ein Lernprozess durch das Erleben, dass man lernt, dass Brüderlichkeit wirklich einen Inhalt haben kann, wirklich ein Wert sein kann. Und dann gibt es auf der dritten Ebene natürlich – und darüber schreibe ich auch – das ist diese virtuelle Umma, weil man weiß, dass man im Mittelpunkt einer Gemeinschaft von Leuten ist, die – und das ist das Geniale an dem islamischen Gebet, dass zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt alle wie Kreise um diesen Mittelpunkt sich aufbauen, das heißt, wenn man die Augen zumacht und sich das vorstellt, so eine Art Satellitenbild, das man beim Gebet wahrnimmt, dann würde man um die Ka'ba herum weltweit solche Kreise sehen. Und das spürt man dort, wenn man direkt im Mittelpunkt ist. Das, glaube ich, hilft dem Lernprozess sehr: dieses Lernen durch Gespräche auf der unteren Ebene, das Lernen durch Erlebnis und das Erspüren auf der mittleren Ebene und das Lernen durch diese Vergegenwärtigung der Vorstellung der großen Umma aller Gläubigen. Insofern ist es eine Erfahrung, die mit Sicherheit das gemeinschaftliche Gefühl oder das Gefühl durch die Gemeinschaftlichkeit unter Moslems sehr stärkt.

F.M.: Spielt dann die Herkunft eine Rolle?

I.T.: Überhaupt nicht. Es kümmert sich niemand. Das ist auch eine völlig falsche Vorstellung. Die fragen auch immer, 'Na ja, muss man sich verkleiden?' oder irgendwie so was, oder irgendwelche Vorstellungen aus dem neunzehnten Jahrhundert. Herkunft spielt überhaupt keine Rolle. Man sieht Menschen aller Hautfarben und aller Sprachen und ...

F.M.: Aber trotzdem beschreiben Sie, wie die Pilger ihre Religion unterschiedlich 'tragen'.

I.T.: Außerhalb der der reinen Hadsch-Tage zieht ja jeder seine eigene Kleidung an. Man merkt auch die vielen Unterschiede. Ach, übrigens, finde ich, ist ein Beispiel, das Naipaul sehr schön widerlegt, fällt mir gerade ein, dass diejenigen, die angeblich als Konvertiten völlig zerstört wurden, dass es genau diejenigen sind, die traditionelle Kleidung tragen. Was natürlich seine Theorie völlig diskreditiert. Weil, das sind gerade Indonesier und Inder, das sind diejenigen, die auch weltweit, als einzige noch, auch im Alltag, und nicht nur an Feiertagen, wirklich auch traditionelle Kleidung tragen.

F.M.: Die Frage nach der Herkunft, die Sie ja auch immer anders beantworten, je nachdem, mit wem Sie sich unterhalten ...

I.T.: Also, meine jetzt.

F.M.: Ja, auch die der anderen. Der eine Brite, der auf Sie zukommt und sagt, 'Du kommst von meinem Kontinent.' Und Sie dann, 'Was meinen Sie?' Und er, 'Du kommst doch aus Deutschland.' Und Sie dann einfach, 'Ein bisschen.' Und das fand ich sehr interessant. Also je nachdem, mit wem sie sich unterhalten. Inwiefern spielt dann Ihre Herkunft eine Rolle?

I.T.: Ja, aber ich glaube, das ist schon irgendwie ein Sonderfall, weil ich in einer indischen Gruppe war, die von Bombay nach Mekka zieht, und diese Inder dann wiederum Verwandte hatten, zum Beispiel, wie jetzt in diesem Fall, britische Moslems, das heißt, irgendwie wurde die Frage meiner Herkunft dann zu einem Thema. Aber das ist, glaube ich, ein Sonderfall, ansonsten auf den Straßen ...

[...]

F.M.: Hadsch-Literatur im Allgemeinen: Inwieweit sehen sie sich als Teil dieser Tradition, oder haben sie sie weiterentwickelt oder fortgeführt?

I.T.: Ich würde mich gerne in diese Tradition einreihen, weil sie auch eine sehr vielfältige, reichhaltige Tradition ist. Ich bin vielleicht ein Paradiesvogel in dieser Tradition, aber ich habe kein Problem, mich da einzureihen. Das ist ein schönes Genre. Andere haben dem Horrorroman oder dem Krimiroman etwas Neues hinzugefügt. Und ich habe dem *safarnameh* oder dem *rihla* was Neues hinzugefügt. *No hassle.*

F.M.: Sie beschreiben am Anfang und dann auch am Ende noch mal, wie Sie diese Brüderschaft mit den anderen Hadsch-Schriftstellern fühlen. Haben Sie vorher viel Hadsch-Literatur gelesen; hat sie die irgendwie beeinflusst?

I.T.: Nein, mehr danach.

F.M.: Nachdem sie auch das Buch schon geschrieben hatten?

I.T.: Nein, zwischen der Hadsch und dem Schreiben.

F.M.: Hat sie [die Hadsch-Literatur] die dann irgendwie beeinflusst, so zu schreiben?

I.T.: Ich bin ziemlich dickköpfig. Ich bin nicht jemand, der sich leicht beeinflussen lässt, weil ich glaube, dass ich ziemlich klare Vorstellung habe von dem, was ich will. Ich denke, ich habe immer Schwierigkeiten, die Frage zu beantworten: 'Welcher Autor hat Sie beeinflusst?' Weil, auf einer gewissen Ebene ist man natürlich von jedem Buch beeinflusst, das man liest, weil man als Autor dann in irgendeiner Weise jedes Buch ablegt. [...] Aber es gibt keinen einzigen Autor, bei dem ich sagen würde, der ist so eine Art Vorbild, ich versuche wie er zu schreiben.

[...]

F.M.: [Trojanow erwähnte vorher, dass er sich jetzt auf seine Romane konzentrieren wolle.] Und keine Reiseliteratur mehr?

I.T.: Ich glaube, weniger. Die wird in Deutschland nicht gewürdigt. Was ich sehr enttäuschend fand ..., also ich glaube, dass das Ganges-Buch [*An den inneren Ufern Indiens: Eine Reise entlang des Ganges*] eines meiner besten Bücher ist. Es ist, glaube ich, ein ungewöhnliches Buch im Genre der Reiseliteratur, ich habe da sehr viel Zeit hereingesteckt. Es ist in Indien sehr gut angekommen, also, in der indischen Ausgabe, es hat auch unter den Autoren richtig viele Fans. In Deutschland ist es wie so ein Stein untergegangen. Und das ist extrem frustrierend. Also wenn man sich so

viel Mühe macht und dann... und dann wird es in der Reisebeilage rezensiert, von irgend so einem Idioten der sagt, 'Naja, nett über den Ganges und so.'

F.M.: Woran mag es liegen, dass Reiseliteratur nicht gewürdigt wird?

I.T.: Das Genre gibt's in Deutschland einfach nicht, es wird nicht ernst genommen. [...] Es gibt ja nicht mehr als drei, vier Leute, die das versuchen. Wolfgang Büscher hat jetzt zwei Bücher, die sich mit Deutschland und diesem Fußmarsch Berlin – Moskau beschäftigen [*Deutschland, eine Reise; Berlin – Moskau: Eine Reise zu Fuß*], und das geht ein bisschen in die Richtung. [Karl-Markus] Gaus hat ein paar Bücher über Osteuropa [*Die versprengten Deutschen: Unterwegs durch Litauen, durch die Zips und am Schwarzen Meer; Die Hundeesser von Svinia; Die sterbenden Europäer*], und dann [Hans Christoph] Buch ein bisschen so Haiti und Afrika [*Tanzende Schatten oder Der Zombie bin ich; Black Box Afrika: Ein Kontinent driftet ab*], und damit sind wir schon am Ende von

F.M.: Wie kann man Reiseliteratur überhaupt definieren?

I.T.: Der Versuch sozusagen, über die reine Reportage hinauszugehen. Wirklich der Versuch, mit literarischen Mitteln ... Wenn man das liest, merk man das eigentlich ... also es ist wahrscheinlich schwer, das theoretisch zu definieren, aber beim Lesen merkt man das sofort. Bei Büscher merkt man sofort vom ersten Satz an, das hat einen literarischen Zug. Und ich finde bei meinem Ganges-Buch auch. Allein die ersten zwei, drei Seiten ...

F.M.: Vielen Dank.

I.T.: Nichts zu danken.

An Interview with Ilija Trojanow

Translation by Bridget Wilson

Frauke Matthes: In my thesis, I address the topic of so-called 'migrant literature'. Your books are often read in this context, and you have also been awarded the Adelbert von Chamisso prize. [This prize is awarded by the Robert Bosch Foundation to German-speaking authors of non-German origin.] What do you make of the term 'migrant literature'? Do you regard it as discrimination in another guise or as a form of ostracism, as other recipients of the prize have regarded it, or is a prize for literature purely a prize for literature?

Ilija Trojanow: As far as I know, no one has declined the prize, and thus even those who criticize it are nevertheless quite pleased to receive it. This criticism cannot therefore be particularly deep-rooted.

It is a crutch. All labels are crutches. If one is aware of this and is conscious not to overrate it, such labels can perhaps help to categorize things. I am not somebody who feels the need to categorize things. And I therefore never use the term myself. But I can understand that people who work differently, who work more in the context of creating and defining categories, can find it helpful to create labels for things. And it's definitely much better than a term such as '*Ausländerliteratur*' ('literature by foreigners'). At least it's a term that somehow also reflects the content of the literature, namely that it focuses on the displacement of material and issues,

and on introducing issues that had never appeared in such literature before, and that this displacement also leads to migration in terms of language, and one identifies that the German language has undergone such migration. The term ['migrant literature'] contains echoes of all this, and is therefore not *that* bad.

F.M.: To what extent is such categorisation wise, or is literature written in German simply German literature?

I.T.: But that isn't true. One could dissect every such term if one so wished. It is, of course, possible to be incredibly laid back about the whole thing. Take Naipaul, who claims to be an English author. He isn't, of course, but it is of course possible to pretend that this isn't important. That is the egocentricity of the artist, to place one's own, unique journey above everything else.

F.M.: You just mentioned the issue of language. What does the German language mean to you as an author?

I.T.: For one thing it represents for us all, and I know most of the other authors [who have received the Adelbert von Chamisso prize], the only true *Heimat* (home). There is no truer *Heimat* than the German language, not least because language is, of course, free from ideology. It can, naturally, be used in an ideological way, but it is not inherently ideological. Language is much more tolerant of us and much more willing to blend with us or to create something new, which is definitely my aim. My aim would be that at some point in the future, when I'm in my grave or have been cremated, or whatever, the German language will somehow play witness to the fact that I was there. Not because I, Ilija Trojanow, wish it, but because I am a representative of a particular historical reality. In my case, that hundreds of thousands of Eastern Europeans came to Germany during the Cold War years.

F.M.: That leads me to my next question: what is *Heimat*? Is it a construct?

I.T.: Yes, it is a construct, of course it is. One can see this in the fact that it only exists in the singular. *Heimat*, therefore, isn't an interesting concept for me, as I believe that *Heimat* is so intimately personal, beyond all fiction and instrumentalization, that *Heimat* is simply a kind of emotional fingerprint of each individual. And I am sure, indeed I am absolutely convinced, that *Heimat* begins with the people who are important to you, i.e. family, surroundings, friends, etc. And if a certain rupture is already there, i.e. if your family comes from another part of

Germany or your wife comes from another country, then this explodes all possible homogenizing definitions. And secondly, *Heimat* is also an expression of biographical connections, and if someone develops connections to a new place [...], then [that place], almost inevitably, also becomes a *Heimat*. [Before the meal we had talked about my time in Scotland. Trojanow now refers to the fact that if I stay here, Scotland could also become a *Heimat* for me.] With a landscape it's similar. [Here, Trojanow means that someone who grows up in the Highlands, for example, at some point ceases to notice the landscape surrounding him, in contrast to a tourist. But the Highlands would nevertheless remain the *Heimat* of the person who grew up there.] If one looks more closely, it's nothing more than a gigantic flickering illusion, and that is why I don't find it a useful means of expression. I therefore hardly use the term at all.

F.M.: What does writing mean to you?

I.T.: I don't know if I can say anything particularly original in this context. Writing is the meaning, the meat of life. It's what I do best. An instrument of self-fulfilment, and means of changing the world. I doubt that I'm very different from most authors in that.

F.M.: What, in your opinion, is the relationship between writing and travel?

I.T.: The relationship between writing and travel is probably a more interesting field, since I believe that for me it's an existential relationship. I believe that my poetology is a product of travelling. And to determine how precisely this product comes into being, one would probably need to go into some detail. But principally, I believe that a certain type of travel leads to a certain type of appreciation, and a certain type of appreciation, in turn, leads to a certain style. And thus, my kind of travelling – and I'm afraid I'm very particular in this regard ... I have a very specific idea of what travel really is: it's not the geographical consumption of places and areas and people, rather it's in fact an attempt to constantly process one's immediate surroundings. It's the attempt to find the foreign. [...] For most people, travel means escaping the foreign, and the whole industry of 'escaping the foreign' [...] – that's why people feel this urge to escape the foreign in the first place To find the foreign in the first place and then to make it your own without destroying it – not destroying in the sense of the reality, but destroying in the

sense of oneself, by dismantling it, by simplifying it, by labelling it – all these ways of taking the foreign to pieces. Elephants swallow stones to aid digestion. And the stones are very important – they grind the elephant's food and at some point they're excreted. I believe the foreign should be like a stone; it can help you to digest reality, but it must also be a conscious weight. Because if it's not a weight, either you've made it too easy for yourself or you've destroyed it, as I said. And that's a lifelong search, a lifelong fight to find a way that's hybrid and in which travel acts as a kind of lubricant or slide, or whatever, to feed this hybridity.

It probably has an awful lot to do with my concept of empathy, too. I'm interested in literature that is empathetic in a philosophical sense. That's why I reject many other travel authors, because in my opinion they have a very cynical way of processing what they see. This empathy is, of course, an almost spiritual term, because one very often falls short and loses faith. It's like an ideal to which one aspires, but which one repeatedly fails to fulfil. And empathy is also, of course – I think this is the central theme in *Der Weltensammler*³ – this attempt, and this is what I believe is the wonderful thing about literature, to give a voice to the voiceless, to all those who have been overlooked. I find literature boring that is written from the centres of power or the centres of experience, the typical bourgeois 'comedy of manners'. We've all seen it millions of times – I find it utterly uninteresting, but that's just me personally. But someone who succeeds in breathing life into a character – and this was my aim with *Der Weltensammler* at least – a character such as Sidi Mubarak Bombay [Burton's African companion on his expeditions in East Africa], real people who were important in their time but who have been ignored for one hundred and fifty years, this is firstly, in part a politico-literary aim of mine, but secondly the way of achieving this only works by empathy. And if I succeeded [in *Der Weltensammler*] then that is only because I fell in love with him [Sidi Mubarak Bombay] as a character, and because, as I see it, he was incredibly close to me at the moment in which he spoke in me and through me.

F.M.: Would it be possible to ask you about your hajj book [*Zu den Heiligen Quellen des Islam (Mumbai to Mecca)*]? [Trojanow mentioned before the interview

³ Trojanow's novel *Der Weltensammler* revolves around Sir Richard Francis Burton's life in British India, Arabia, and East Africa, told from various perspectives, Burton's and a 'native's' from these parts of the world respectively.

that for him closed books are effectively closed books.] At the end of the book you write that in writing the book you made the journey a second time. How does that work? What is it like? And what is the relationship between writing and travel in this case? Is to write to travel? I find it a very interesting concept that one can make a journey a second time in writing about it, that one experiences the places again.

I.T.: With the hajj it is such that one very quickly loses the sense of awe that one has there, a feeling of being both raised and cleansed, and I think that that is the pain – if people, and I use the word ‘people’ as opposed to ‘believers’ deliberately, because there are so many misconceptions that everyone who takes part in the hajj is a believer – ... Of course, it is a religious tradition, but it is also a cultural tradition, which means that one sees lots of people who you could almost say have difficulties with fundamental rituals because they are not particularly devout in their everyday life. I had the same conversation with three people, I think, who asked ‘What is everyday life really like? Do you really pray five times?’ And they all replied ‘No, of course not!’ I mean, even people who don’t lead a strictly religious life have been touched spiritually in some way on the pilgrimage. I think everyone I spoke to said this sense of being touched was wonderful, but that it disappeared very quickly. It was the same for me. It disappears disturbingly quickly, and one begins to ask oneself ‘What is actually the point of it all, if in fact ...’ That’s effectively the fundamental task of every Moslem [Trojanow uses the term ‘Moslem’ as opposed to ‘Muslim’], but if it disappears so quickly, if it doesn’t in fact alter one for life, then there’s something wrong with the theory. The idea is, as it were, that one then faces the rest of one’s life as a different person, and I was really grateful that I could turn my back on this phase of being riddled by doubt and a sense of loss, and could once again experience the ecstasy, the surprise, the fulfilment – that I could experience all these elements again through writing. One conscious decision in writing the book was to re-imagine my innocence back then. I deliberately tried not to write the book from the perspective of the person I was when I wrote it but to conjure up once again the unknowing, or only semi-knowing, openness and curiosity with which I originally embarked on the journey. And in writing, I really did at times experience this emotional *déjà-vu*, as it were. It really was a kind of film which I spanned over my experiences, and that was very useful. I apparently even managed to write so

convincingly that one of my *ulema* ['ulama'; scribe] brothers in Bombay believed I had been on my second hajj, although I had already mentioned the fact that I was writing it, but it apparently so convinced him that he wrote back, that he congratulated me on my second hajj, and I replied 'No, no, I wasn't on the hajj', I ...

F.M.: Do you have the feeling when reading the book or your notes *today* that you could experience the hajj again?

I.T.: I didn't even go back there, because I was worried that I would be disappointed. I really had two wonderful experiences, I mean the hajj and ... And the fact that I wrote the book more quickly than any other book I've ever written also plays a part. I mean, the writing also resembled the hajj in a number of ways. I had three months, I wrote every single day during those three months (and it was just at the time of the hajj), and I wanted to finish on 31 January, as far as I can remember. And it did finish on 31 January. And the hajj had ended, and Eid too. I believe that made the whole experience that much more intense. I have now been through it all very intensively twice, and I don't wish to devalue it, or even to eclipse it by doing it all again. I feel that's the right attitude.

F.M.: Do you travel with a notebook?

I.T.: Yes, of course.

F.M.: Because I didn't have that feeling when reading your book, but [...] I also look at V.S. Naipaul in the chapter of my thesis in which I discuss your book. And with him it really is extreme; he travels with a notebook and has a particular objective when talking to people. But I didn't have that feeling in your case.

I.T.: That's absolutely right. In my opinion, these are two fundamentally different attitudes of what writing is, within a single genre, of course. He [V.S. Naipaul] aims, as it were, to reveal. He aims, ... or at least he claims, to listen, but in fact one hears what he wants to hear, very, very clearly. The problem with the two – it's necessary to distinguish between his three India books [*An Area of Darkness*; *India: A Wounded Civilization*; *India: A Million Mutinies Now*] and the two Islam books [*Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* und *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples*], I expect you are primarily referring to his two Islam books ... In the context of his two Islam books, the fact is, well, that he was already, how should I put it, not exactly old, but certainly of an advanced age, a

world-famous author. A friend for instance told me that in Karachi he literally sat in his hotel and let the people come to him in the hotel. That's a little problematic, even as an initial approach to research. He has, and his – one can see it clearly in his adepts, that is in the young Indians who worship him – he has this way, due to his overblown self-confidence, his intellect, I mean he believes that intellect gives you the power to do anything. I wouldn't be so sure. I would say that values such as instinct, empathy, emotional openness, components such as these, are just as important. He tends to interpret reality even as he sees it. Stylistically, this can be seen in things such as: 'He was a man from wherever who thought this and that, who hoped this and that, who wished for this and that.' That's where my jaw always drops – I couldn't even say that of myself, let alone in reference to a person whom I've only just met, to draw such a policeman-like portrait of a person after just ten minutes. This is of course a result of the fact that he really believes that with his intellect he is able to say something particular about a person on the basis of his observations, on the basis of a person's speech, on the basis of his, I don't know, his physiognomy, his gestures. That's what makes Pankaj Mishra, for instance, so extraordinary. I believe it's a very serious problem. I try not to appear as an ego in my books. Of course I don't always succeed in this aim. But I try as hard as possible to break open, as it were, the fact that I have a very unique, personal, limited, skewed view of reality. An epistemologist would, of course, say that I can be no more than I am. That's true. But it's still very possible in stylistic terms to prevent this by avoiding all subjective observations, by not projecting anything on to the people in question, by not judging them, neither the people nor any reality.

I once wrote an essay focussing on Günter Grass. That was my response to *Zunge zeigen* (*Show Your Tongue*) [Grass' travelogue of his stay in India, 1986-1987]. Grass, and *Zunge zeigen*, are similar, so is [Pier Paolo] Pasolini's *The Scent of India*, I think it's called *L'odore dell'India* in Italian. It's all so *The King of all Eye*; the mighty Western intellectual setting himself up as a lighthouse in the darkness of the Third World, and his intellect is the spotlight, illuminating this bog of superstition and inefficiency, the stink, the faeces and stupidity, etc., etc., and he sees that everything's shit, draws his negative conclusions, as it were, and turns on his heels. And interestingly – what fascinated me and the reason I did it in the first place

– was that it's exactly the same with the so-called 'Left'. With Naipaul, one simply knows that he's conservative, very reactionary in his values, but this neo-imperial gesture is exactly the same with the so-called 'Left', Pasolini (life-long fervent Marxist), Günter Grass (Social Democrat, trade unionist) ...

I think the problem is that Naipaul's books are based on a fundamentally incorrect premise, a premise that can be comprehensively disproved, namely that Islam systematically wiped all the dominant cultures that went before it. Anyone familiar with the issues can only shake his head and ask himself how on earth he [Naipaul] came up with this, it's such a ridiculous attitude. But that's not true. Even in a country like Iran, where Islam has always been very, very centralized, where the Shia, unlike the Sunni, have a proper clergy. Which means that the culture's penetration of everyday life was much stronger there than in Sunni countries, so even there it positively abounds with ..., starting with the new year *Norouz*, which is a Zoroastrian thing, right up to the ringer schools and poems, etc., it abounds with pre-Islamic cultural elements, moments, which still exist ...

The whole of India is one big negation of this theory; in India almost everything is syncretistic. Things are changing though, now. The great tragedy of our time isn't this ridiculous 'war on terror', which is more like a justification of increasing dictatorial trends and inclinations of Western democracy, no, the really awful thing is how the Sufi interworlds are being destroyed. Pakistan provides a particularly dramatic example of this. The whole Islamic culture in countries like Pakistan is based on Sufism; there is nothing beyond Sufism, all music, all poetry, dances, clothing, everything. And these fundamentalists, be they Wahabi or Deobandi, or whatever, try to destroy Sufism, even by force; they actually fight, and people are actually killed. In the power base in the North-West Province, they've now even banned music. That really is a catastrophe, because it's as if they really are trying to suck the marrow, the cultural marrow, from Islam, because all that's left is an ideology which is utterly dead, which in my opinion can be of no value whatsoever. Thus, anyone who begins with such a premise and then goes on for three hundred pages trying to prove a false premise represents a serious problem.

F.M.: It's also interesting to identify what Naipaul regards as 'authentic'. For him, anyone who doesn't come from the Arab world is a convert. He travels *Among*

the Converted Peoples [the sub-title of his second 'Islam book' *Beyond Belief*]. What do you make of that? I think it is a very problematic concept that anyone who doesn't come from the Arabic world should not be a 'real' Muslim.

I.T.: That is a very strange premise. I think I know where it comes from. He's very close to the BJP in India [*Bharatiya Janajta Party*, 'the Indian People's Party', highly conservative and Hindu-nationalist] and the *Hindutvawallahs* [supporters of Hindu nationalism or politicized Hinduism (*Hindutva*)]. [...] The whole ideology of the *Hindutva* is based on the idea that Indian Muslims are not ..., well that there are two possibilities: either they aren't real Muslims or they aren't real Indians, but that Muslim India is fundamentally impossible. Thus, the *Hindutva* demand that people accept that India is a Hindu nation and that Hinduism permits an infinite number of mutations and variants, including, for instance that according to some traditions Mohammed is the tenth *avatar* [reincarnation] of Vishnu, etc. etc. And they [the Muslims] should, as it were, return to the Hindu fold; they either have some strange sect [...] or they should disappear. That's about the heart of it, roughly speaking. And I think that had a significant effect on his [Naipaul's] structural view. It's absurd for two reasons: firstly, the future of Islam lies solely in the hands of the so-called 'converts'. In cultural terms, the Arab countries really have destroyed everything – I think they're the most defunct countries I know. I spent three weeks this year in Bahrain, I was in Saudi Arabia, and I really can't imagine a much worse society. They are societies that, thanks to their exceedingly rapid development, both technically and economically, faster than any development anywhere, ever, have totally lost touch with their own cultural traditions. It is a slave-master society. In Dubai 80% are foreign workers, in Bahrain 50%, who are often held as slaves, or, even if they earn a respectable wage, do not have any rights – and that leads to a real ghettoization of the working population. They are absolutely corrupt, through and through; their only real interest is in Western consumer goods, which, surprisingly, is not at odds with the Wahabi ideology. Quite simply, it really is a society in crisis. Because the societies which are not in crisis – Indonesia, India – are societies in which an unbelievable, well, variety, means of cultural expression, I mean in Islam, on the fringes of Islam, even outwith Islam, is in evidence daily. And thus it is the 'converts' who represent the future of Islam. That, in my opinion, is the first point in

which his [Naipaul's] view is somehow skewed. And the second is that I believe that the converts do not permeate the religious gene of the human race. It's not the case that I, today, have a particular mentality, a particular attitude, indeed, a kind of convert mindset, simply because my great- great- great-grandfather converted a thousand years ago. Granted, this may be true of people who themselves converted, but not if it was a thousand years ago; that's completely absurd. Neither have I ever seen anything in my life to bear this premise out; quite the contrary, what happened is that these societies then develop their own myths, and the Indian Moslems for instance are very proud of the fact that Adam was in Northern India and then went to Sri Lanka, and so forth, that means myths are also transferred, and this is why Sufism has enjoyed such enormous success, and Sufism is the interface of Islam, a place of constant cultural adaption and creator of local holy figures. And Naipaul doesn't understand that at all. I mean, he doesn't understand the whole dynamism of the Sufi culture and spirituality, he simply doesn't understand it. That doesn't appear in any of his writing, and when it [Sufi spirituality] appears, then completely misunderstood. I think he looks at things from a far too purely rational perspective.

F.M.: He also tries to explain this 'Muslim rage' and 'fundamentalism', and how it develops. And he explains it all by means of this 'artificiality' ...

I.T.: Yes, quite, absolute rubbish. Indonesians are incredibly friendly and withdrawn people, they're not at all 'ragy' [*sic*]. The mass murder wasn't Islamic, it was capitalists versus communists. And all these authors do it, it's all so repulsive, because it's all so insincere; they always tar the Indonesians with the same brush: 'Well, and the violence of the Moslems, Indonesian civil war', which really was horrific, but it had absolutely nothing to do with Islam; it was with the help of the USA that the dictator was able to have the Communist party and all its supporters slaughtered – it really had absolutely nothing to do with Islam.

F.M.: A very practical question: for whom do you write? I am often asked this question when talking about your book. What kind of public do you have in mind, do you have one in mind at all?

I.T.: Never. Anyone who can read.

F.M.: How was the hajj book received?

I.T.: It didn't sell very well. We sold..., I guess it must now be around the five thousand mark. So ...

F.M.: What do you think are the reasons for that?

I.T.: I think the book is a view – which your question perhaps indicates to me, too – that falls between two stools. The really devout believers probably expect a book of instruction – there are already so many available: day one, go there, say this prayer, etc. Although everyone who has so far read or heard it was very moved. Now, at public readings, I've ... – there are always a number of Moslems there – ... They really do all come up and say, 'That was very close to my own experiences, it really moved me because I found it quite lovely. I've also done a few readings in mosques; the responses there were also very positive. So it can't be put down to the fact that the book somehow alienates or deters them [the Muslims]. But I think that those people don't look for such books. They look, if at all, for more pragmatic books. And I think it's too remote for normal Germans. The book's strength is also its weakness. And there were also a few bad reviews, fully unjustified in my opinion ..., claiming that I was looking at Islam through rose-tinted spectacles, or something like that. That shows how incredibly brainwashed the people have become, that they completely fail to identify the aim of a book, which, incidentally, is not even to discuss Islam, but rather to give an impression of what the hajj actually means – no more and no less.

F.M.: Was this, too, the motivation for writing this book?

I.T.: Yes, absolutely. I didn't actually want to write the book, but then I had dinner with my publisher and I talked the entire time, absolutely non-stop, about the hajj, and afterwards, he said: 'You know, that really is incredibly moving. I should like to read that, and if I'd like to read it, then I should think a few other people might also be interested – so please write it down.' I didn't originally have the slightest intention of ... And thus, since you ask, notebook etc.: for instance, I didn't write down many conversations, as I would do if I were to travel and research an essay or a report or a book – in that case I would jot down any really important quotations. I didn't do that there [on the hajj]. I don't know whether that's such a bad thing. It's impossible to distance oneself from one's own book, but I think the whole book has something dreamlike about it. Somehow it's not rooted in anything terribly

pragmatic, and maybe it's no bad thing, otherwise it might have become too much like a report.

F.M.: But as far as I can tell, there is at present a very broad interest in Islam. [**I.T.:** Yes.] In this context, it's interesting that the book doesn't ...

I.T.: Hmm, I don't know whether the interest really is there; I would question that. In *Der Weltensammler*, for instance, everyone who wrote to me or who came and spoke to me at readings, and that really is a quite lot of people now, with the exception of two individuals, said that they liked the first ['Britisch-Indien' (British India')] and the third ['Ostafrika' (East Africa')] chapters best. It may, of course, be the case that the second ['Arabien' (Arabia')] is of a slightly lower literary standard; it's impossible for me to judge. But if this is not the case, then the alternative explanation, of course, is that one hears it [Islam] everyday in the press, but somehow doesn't really, and maybe there's also a need, or was among educated people, to acquire a basic knowledge of Islam. That's why sales of the Qur'an and introductions and so were good for several years after '9/11', but I think that's as far as it goes.

F.M.: Could the book contribute to a different, better understanding of Islam?

I.T.: Yes, of course. It tries to, but if you only sell five thousand copies, you're not reaching terribly many people.

F.M.: Another thing that I find very interesting, not least in reviews, is how often such Orientalist terms are still thrown in – in reference to *Der Weltensammler*, too. The term 'oriental narrative' is often used. That always makes my hackles rise slightly ...

I.T.: Yes, and in particular people simply have no idea and neither do they wish to learn. I've become tired, and I now don't tell anybody anything, after twenty years I really am tired of fighting prejudices, clichés, ignorance, because it simply goes in one ear and out the other. I tell them that an Oriental story-telling drive simply doesn't exist – on the contrary, these works to which they refer, *One Thousand and One Nights*, for instance, are fundamentally postmodern. There's hardly a single book which better reflects the ideal of the postmodern novel, with all its shifts and shufflings, really John Barth-ish, the story in the story in the story in the story, the fissures, the jumps, it's everything possible, but nothing is simply regaled

in an innocent, fairy-story kind of way. And the others, *Pānja Tantra*, for instance, that's an Indian book, [...], just the same, so they're all books that don't even begin to fit this idea of ... So where does this Oriental story-telling drive come from? I've no idea. After all, it's just as true of us. In the early stages of our literature, we have *Don Quixote*, we have Boccaccio, we have the *Canterbury Tales*, they are all similar in terms of structure, some elements have been taken from Arabic texts, told with the same boldness, on the contrary, Boccaccio is much bolder than *One Thousand and One Nights*.

F.M.: I'd like to return to your travels. Travel as a learning process is also a Muslim attitude. Is to travel also to learn? Was the hajj a learning process for you? Of course you talk to many, many people and describe praying with other people, how you're learning. What does travel mean as a means of learning, as a learning process?

I.T.: Any journey on which one learns nothing is a wasted journey. On a pilgrimage, of course, one learns in the real sense of the word, it opens and expands one's consciousness. I believe the strength of a pilgrimage like the hajj is that one lives and learns together with others. In fact, I think the central concept of the hajj, as I see it, is the *umma*, the community. Community exists, it exists, as it were, on several levels: there's the community of one's own immediate group, within which one occasionally has very serious conversations, very intense discussions, not least because there's a lot of time when nothing happens, one sits about, some people play with their mobile phones, but others talk. Then there's the community by which one is surrounded at the various different times, during prayer, during the stonings, on Arafat, with every step of the hajj, there's a mass of people which finds and defines itself. I've included an example in my book, how I hug this old man from Pakistan, with whom I completed one circuit, we hugged each other, went once around the Ka'ba. That's something that one learns, it's really a learning process through experience, that one learns that fraternity really can mean something, it really can have real value. And then, of course, there's the third level, and I write about this too, it's this virtual *umma*, because one knows that one is at the centre of a community of people who – and this is the really impressive thing about Islamic prayer, that at a certain point in time everyone starts to orbit around this centre, I mean, when you

close your eyes and imagine a kind of satellite image that you see in prayer, then you would see such orbit paths across the entire world circling the Ka'ba. And one feels that when one is there, right at the centre. I think that really helps the learning process: this learning through conversations at the lowest level, the learning through experience and sensation at the middle level, and the learning through realizing the idea of a vast *umma* of all believers. And it is thus an experience which most certainly strengthens the community spirit or the spirit of the community among Moslems.

F.M.: Does one's place of origin play any part in this?

I.T.: Not at all. Nobody's interested in that. The idea is utterly erroneous. And they always ask whether one has to dress up or anything like that, and have random ideas straight out of the nineteenth century. Where you come from doesn't have anything to do with it. You see people of all skin colours and languages and ...

F.M.: But you nevertheless describe how the pilgrims 'wear' their religion in different ways.

I.T.: On all the days that are not purely hajj days one wears one's normal clothes. One also notices many differences. And, by the way, there's one example which very neatly disproves Naipaul, it's just occurred to me, that those who, as converts, are apparently utterly destroyed are precisely those who wear traditional clothing. Which of course utterly discredits his theory. Because it's precisely those Indonesians and Indians, those are the ones, the only ones worldwide, who still wear traditional clothing in their day-to-day life, and not just on holy days.

F.M.: The question of origin, which you answer differently every time, depending on who you are speaking to.

I.T.: You mean mine.

F.M.: Yes, but also that of the others. The one British man who comes up to you and says, 'You're from my continent'. And you reply, 'What do you mean?' And he responds, 'You come from Germany, don't you.' And you simply answer, 'A little.' I found that very interesting. So, depending on who you are speaking to. To what extent does your place of origin play a part in this?

I.T.: Yes, but I think that's somehow an exception, as I was in an Indian group travelling from Bombay to Mecca, and these Indians in turn had relations, for

instance, as in this case, British Moslems, I mean, somehow the question of my origin then became an issue. But I think that's an exception, otherwise on the streets ...

[...]

F.M.: Hajj literature in general. To what extent do you regard yourself as part of this tradition, or have you taken it a step further?

I.T.: I would very much like to see myself as part of this tradition, because it is also a very multifaceted, rich tradition. Perhaps I'm a kind of bird of Paradise in this tradition, but I don't have a problem with seeing myself as part of it. It's an attractive genre. Other authors have added a new element to the horror story or the detective story. And I've added a new element to the *safarnameh* or the *rihla*. *No hassle*.

F.M.: At the beginning, and then again at the end, you describe your sense of this fraternity with other hajj writers. Did you read lots of hajj literature beforehand, did this influence you in any way?

I.T.: No, more afterwards.

F.M.: After you had written the book?

I.T.: No, between the hajj and writing.

F.M.: Did it then somehow influence you to write in a particular way?

I.T.: I'm fairly bloody-minded. I'm not somebody who lets himself be influenced easily; I think I have a fairly clear idea of what I want. I think I always have problems answering that question, 'Which author had an influence on you?' Because, on a particular level, of course, one is influenced by every book one reads, because as an author one then somehow archives each book. But there isn't one author who I would say was a kind of role model for me, I try to write like him.

[...]

F.M.: [Trojanow mentioned earlier that he now wished to concentrate on his novels.] And no more travel literature?

I.T.: Less, I think. It's not appreciated in Germany. Which I find very disappointing ..., I mean I think that the Ganges book [*An den inneren Ufern Indiens: Eine Reise entlang des Ganges (Along the Ganga: To the Inner Shores of India)*] is one of my best books. I believe it's an unusual book within the genre of travel

literature, I invested an awful lot of time in it. It had a very good reception in India, I mean the Indian edition, lots of authors are real fans. In Germany it was a complete flop. And that's incredibly frustrating. When one makes such an effort, and then ... and then it's reviewed in the travel section, by some idiot or other who says, 'Well, it's quite a pleasant read about the Ganges and all that.'

F.M.: What could be the reason for this lack of appreciation of travel literature?

I.T.: The genre simply doesn't exist in Germany, it's not taken seriously. [...] No more than three or four authors even attempt it. Wolfgang Büscher has now written two books, focussing on Germany and this walk Berlin – Moscow [*Deutschland, eine Reise (Germany, A Journey)*]; *Berlin – Moskau: Eine Reise zu Fuß (Berlin – Moscow: A Journey by Foot)*], and that is something along these lines. [Karl-Markus] Gaus has written a few books on Eastern Europe [*Die versprengten Deutschen: Unterwegs durch Litauen, durch die Zips und am Schwarzen Meer (The Scattered Germans: Travelling Through Lithuania, the Zips and Along the Black Sea)*]; *Die Hundeesser von Svinia (The Dog Eaters of Svinia)*; *Die sterbenden Europäer (The Dying Europeans)*], and then [Hans Christoph] Buch a little on Haiti and Africa [*Tanzende Schatten oder Der Zombie bin ich (Dancing Shadows, or I am the Zombie)*]; *Black Box Afrika: Ein Kontinent driftet ab (Black Box Africa: A Continent is Drifting Away)*], and that's about it

F.M.: How can one define travel literature at all?

I.T.: The attempt, as it were, to go beyond simple reporting. A real attempt, using literary means ... When reading it, one should notice that ... I mean, it's probably difficult to define it in theoretical terms, but when reading one notices it immediately. In Büscher's case, one notices it from the very first sentence, it has a literary pull. And I think the same is true of my Ganges book. Even the first two or three pages ...

F.M.: Thank you very much.

I.T.: You're welcome.

Appendix II

Further Relevant Literature

Primary Literature and Anthologies

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Appendix III

Publications

‘Inauthentic Islam? V.S. Naipaul’s *Among the Believers* and *Beyond Belief*’, in *Islam in Südasien*, Themenschwerpunkt des Südasien-Informationsnetz: *suedasion.info*, ed. by Nadja-Christina Schneider, Maria Framke, and Christoph Sprung (2006) <<http://www.suedasion.info/analysen/1462>> [last accessed 20 February 2008] (29 para.)

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‘Defining “Home”: Cultural Translation as Self-Exploration in Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*’, in *Betwixt and Between: Place and Cultural Translation*, ed. by Stephen Kelly and David Johnston (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007), pp. 158-69

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11. November 2006. Analysen: Weltweit – Kunst & Kultur

Inauthentic Islam?

V.S. Naipaul's *Among the Believers* and *Beyond Belief* [1]

von Frauke Matthes

Introduction: V.S. Naipaul as Travelling Writer

V.S. Naipaul's journeys to non-Arab Muslim countries follow a long tradition of interest in and writing about 'the East'. [2] It was then part of various imperial aspirations and thus also often served as a projection area for the colonizer's and traveller's own desires and needs. [3] As 'the Orient' was frequently perceived as one of the most 'secretive' parts of the world, travellers tried to discover what was allegedly hidden behind walls and veils. Naipaul's travel accounts *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981) and *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples* (1996), written after the re-visiting of the places of his first journey, initially suggest a genuine interest in 'the believers', Muslim people living apart from the 'original land' of Islam. The texts reveal, however, an idiosyncratic portrayal on non-Arabs which is based on Naipaul's ideas of what Islam in the countries he travels in (Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia) means. Naipaul's visits to these places primarily aim at discovering and revealing knowledge and 'truth'. In the prologue of *Beyond Belief* he tells us:

This is a book about people. It is not a book of opinion. It is a book of stories. [...] This book is a follow-up to a book [...], *Among the Believers* [...]. When I started on this journey in 1979 I knew almost nothing about Islam – it is the best way to start on a venture – and that first book was an exploration of the details of the faith and what looked like its capacity for revolution. The theme of conversion was always there; but I didn't see it as clearly as I saw it on this second journey. [4]

Naipaul suggests that it was his aim to gain knowledge about Islam with a particular focus on the 'theme of conversion' (this central notion even appears in the subtitle of *Beyond Belief*). He consciously re-visits the places known from his first journey, which resulted in a text, *Among the Believers*. Yet the focus of his exploration in *Beyond Belief* seems to have shifted slightly. This shift in emphasis appears to have been caused by reflecting on his first journey as well as by the simple idea that, particularly after a time gap of several years, one never sees a place with the 'same eyes' again. Suman Gupta points out that the central question of *Among the Believers* is: 'in what way do Muslims expect Islam to facilitate the creation of an

ideal Islamic state, and what sort of concrete shape (in economic, technological and political terms) is the latter likely to take?'[5] I regard Naipaul's objective in both books as the exploration of what he describes as the 'Muslim rage',[6] 'rage about the faith, political rage',[7] against which he – a Western-educated cosmopolitan traveller – sees himself in relief. His writings explore, therefore, not simply 'the other' (the Muslims) but also 'the self' (the secular 'Westerner' Naipaul) in relation to the question of religious revivalism.

These considerations raise questions about colonial techniques of representation and interpretation, and about the acknowledgement that every traveller is influenced by his/her culture(s), religion, history and other aspects of his/her background. Stuart Hall refers to this as

a recognition that we all speak from a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position as 'ethnic artists' or film-makers. We are all, in that sense, *ethnically* located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are. But this is also a recognition that this is not an ethnicity which is doomed to survive, as Englishness was, only by marginalizing, dispossessing, displacing, and forgetting other ethnicities. This precisely is the politics of ethnicity predicated on difference and diversity.[8]

Hall's assumption that we speak in the light of a particular cultural background holds true especially for Naipaul. In 1979, shortly after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Naipaul goes on a journey to non-Arab Muslim countries to discover how a religion such as Islam has been able to develop such a destructive force 'among its believers'. He goes on a pilgrimage or quest whereby he also visits places of Muslim worship and pilgrimage, and thereby defines himself primarily as an individual who travels in opposition to the believers, a group of people Naipaul does not seem to feel a connection with. This notion goes back to his early childhood in the Indian (Hindu) diaspora of Trinidad: 'We knew nothing of Muslims. This idea of strangeness, of the thing to be kept outside, extended even to other Hindus.'[9] Naipaul grew up with a strong sense of difference, of being part of a minority; nonetheless, when he started travelling, he seems to have been looking for similarities between him and other migrants regardless of their religious and cultural backgrounds: 'I thought, when I began to travel in the Muslim world, that I would be travelling among people who would be like the people of my own community.'[10] Naipaul's comment could be read with his awareness of a similar colonial background for Hindu and Muslim migrants (after all, many Indians are Muslims). However, this kind of identification based on his former Trinidadian community as well as a common experience of migration with Muslims is a limited one only and is quickly transferred into a number of dichotomies – between East and West, Muslims and Hindus – which seem to influence Naipaul's writing about his travels around non-Arab Muslim countries.

Naipaul's desire to visit non-Arab Muslim countries is triggered by watching news about the Iranian revolution on television. One could regard this news item as a 'pretext',[11] which also initiated a number of imperial travellers' wishes to see the colonies with their own eyes in order to gain knowledge about them and particularly their people. Additionally, Naipaul's travel accounts express a political aspect, which could also be the focus of colonial travel writing. Peter Hulme points out that '[g]iven that the world is constantly in flux, there is still a prominent place for the mixture of personal reportage and

socio-political analysis which has been a component of travel writing since its earliest days.'[12] Naipaul's initial objective (the inquiry into the religiousness of 'the converted peoples') implies this kind of link between personal interest and political analysis. In 'Our Universal Civilization', a non-fictional essay that focuses on Naipaul's interaction with Islam, he describes this connection by reflecting upon the word 'fundamentalism' as it is used in the media and, consequently, by asking himself why Islam seems to grow stronger in a number of non-Arab Muslim countries.

'Fundamentalism' – in connection with the Mohammedan world – was not a word often used by the newspapers in 1979; they hadn't yet worked through that concept. What they spoke of more was 'the revival of Islam'. And that, indeed, to anyone contemplating it from a distance, was a puzzle. Islam which had apparently so little to offer its adherents in the last century and in the first half of this – what did it have to offer an infinitely more educated, infinitely faster, world in the later years of the century?[13]

Naipaul seems to claim that he wants to reach beyond the superficial representation of Islam in the media by travelling to the parts of the Muslim world that 'revive' Islam. However, one needs to take into account what Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan emphasize: that 'travel writing frequently provides an effective alibi for the perpetuation or reinstallation of ethnocentrally superior attitudes to "other" cultures, peoples, and places.'[14] This notion is evident in Naipaul's statement: the word 'Mohameddan' nowadays is obsolete as it reduces Islam exclusively to its origins and seems to deny its development, transformation and adaptation in other parts of the Muslim world. Furthermore, the statement that the media have not worked through the concept of fundamentalism produces the impression that Naipaul, by contrast, understands this concept by travelling to the places where it flourishes.[15] He perceives himself as a knowledgeable traveller. Yet how does Naipaul really position himself as a traveller and writer from a profoundly non-Muslim background, and how does he approach the 'riddle of fundamentalism'?

Naipaul's Answer to the 'Riddle of Fundamentalism': The Theme of Conversion

The theme of conversion – as a 'way of travelling' from one cultural and religious background to a different cultural and religious present, usually having happened generations ago – is prominent in Naipaul's books. Naipaul – a secular Hindu who grew up with a strong sense of community in the Indian diaspora of Trinidad – undertakes 'excursions among the converted peoples', whose form of Islam he identifies as a transformed one, and perceives conversion as the running theme throughout his explorations. According to Naipaul, the idea of conversion implies an idea of originality or common origin on which Islam is built, yet also a sense of leaving non-Islamic traditions and customs behind.

Islam is often superficially associated with a strong sense of tradition and a focus on the past. Although it is the youngest of the three 'religions of the book', it is often perceived as a religion that looks back to its origins as a means of justifying or explaining the present. Naipaul is interested in Islam's origin: he employs Islam's past – or rather the believers' urge to refer back to it – as a means of understanding its

present state, and as a projection area for his critique.

Naipaul travels in order to find out how fundamentalism could grow into such a significant issue in the non-Arab Muslim world. He sees one answer to his query in the conversion from culturally different, non-Islamic cultures to a religion whose new believers do not share the same associations with original Muslims. In his prologue to *Beyond Belief* he states:

Islam is in its origin an Arab religion. Everyone not an Arab who is a Muslim is a convert. Islam is not simply a matter of conscience or private belief. It makes imperial demands. A convert's world view alters. His holy places are in Arab lands; his sacred language is Arabic. His idea of history alters. He rejects his own; he becomes, whether he likes it or not, a part of the Arab story. The convert has to turn away from everything that is his. The disturbance for societies is immense, and even after a thousand years can remain unresolved; the turning away has to be done again and again. People develop fantasies about who and what they are; and in the Islam of converted countries there is an element of neurosis and nihilism. These countries can be easily set on the boil. (BB, p. 1)

The connection between 'fundamentalism' and conversion is, according to Naipaul's observations, based on the convert's alleged loss of his/her past and the taking on of an alien past. For him, the converts' original ties to their culturally different past had been severed with the act of conversion to Islam; yet simultaneously it is not possible for them to embrace the new religion completely as they are not familiar with its roots in the same way as an original (Arab) Muslim would be. Religion is, therefore, closely connected to an idea of origin and identity as well as the convert's 'neurosis' to be a 'proper' Muslim and his/her nihilism of the previous past.

For Naipaul, the notion of conversion is closely connected to a 'Muslim idea' of the past. According to his interpretation, the forms of Islam he encounters on his journeys are mediated forms of Islam: Islams without a past, or rather with a re-constructed past connected to Arabia. As Naipaul does not credit the changing nature of any religion, he describes how Islam itself has 'converted' in the countries he visits: from a 'pure' form of religion to a form of politics (primarily to 'fundamentalism'). Naipaul seems to work with double standards here: the religion he was exposed to as a child, his form of Hinduism as he experienced it in the Indian diaspora of Trinidad, was certainly as 'impure' as the Islam he encounters in non-Arab countries. Other cultural influences from the Caribbean, Africa etc. will have shaped 'his' Hinduism.[16] Although Naipaul is not a convert himself and his family is from Hinduism's 'original land', India, his Hinduism is, just as the forms of Islam he encounters, detached from the 'original land' of South Asia. One could even extend this idea and regard the different forms of Hinduism as they exist in the countries he travels in as 'mediated' forms of Hinduism, a religion that has been shaped by the encounter with other religions and cultures. Naipaul bemoans the loss of 'his' religion due to the contemporary dominance of Islam, and he does not establish an 'original' form of Hinduism as he does with Islam.

Naipaul argues that in non-Arab Muslim countries '[t]he faith abolished the past. And when the past was

abolished like this, more than an idea of history suffered. Human behavior, and ideals of good behavior could suffer.’[17] These countries wanted to become ‘pure(ly) Muslim’ by cutting their ties with their own past completely, which is also partly Naipaul’s ‘own’ past, the Hindu past of his ancestors. (He particularly experiences this form of identification in Indonesia (AB, p. 435).) The revival of Islam and its ‘fundamentalist’ form of expression in particular serve as a counterpoint to Naipaul’s perception of an ‘original’ past, including its ‘human side’, which was often forcefully removed through the act of conversion. He describes in great detail how Muslims ‘invent’ history and an Arab ancestry in order to overcome this loss of cultural originality and to ‘feel’ purely, authentically Muslim:[18] ‘I was among people whose identity was more or less contained in the faith. I was among people who wished to be pure.’[19] This (religious) history is closely tied to the political development and history of the countries he visits: here Islam – maybe more so than in ‘originally’ Muslim countries – tends to be not only a religion but a complete way of life.

So I not only began to understand what people in Pakistan meant when they told me that Islam was a complete way of life, affecting everything; I began to understand that – though it might be said that we had shared a common sub-continental origin – I had travelled a different way. I began to formulate the idea of the universal civilization – which, growing up in Trinidad, I had lived or been part of without quite knowing that I did so.[20]

Naipaul starts his argument by establishing similarities between himself and South Asian Muslims (a common sub-continental origin). He continues by finding a connection to his personal experiences which are primarily based on migrations – literally to Britain, yet also metaphorically on to a different intellectual, (religiously) more independent level – and perceives the forms of Islam he encounters on his journeys primarily in relation to himself as a representative of ‘the secular West’. His development as a person as well as a writer has resulted in his idea of the ‘universal civilization’, of which Islam can only be part if it refrains from being hostile to the (secular) West. Islam, as he sees it, did not develop towards a ‘universal civilization’, and, in his opinion, this means stagnation: Islam does not seem to progress, something which is revealed particularly by its ‘medieval’ nature. A modern Islamic state is, therefore, not possible[21] and is bound to fail.[22] Naipaul seems to create ‘a Western identity centred on the idea of modernity’[23] and, therefore, perceives ‘Islam [as a] religion with a glorious past but an impoverished present.’[24] One could argue, however, that Naipaul tries to compensate for his own lack of past to some extent. Having a past is part of being a ‘metropolitan writer’.[25] As a former colonial, he bemoans his lack of tradition and, as a result, seems to have created ‘a myth of origin’.[26] Naipaul’s background and his own sense of (non-)belonging needs to be considered in this context. Having been brought up in the Indian diaspora of Trinidad, his own sense of non-belonging contributes to his understanding of notions of origin. Naipaul often refers to his – a migrant’s – sense of loss of his old tradition as well as a sense of not being part of a new tradition after having moved to Britain. Furthermore, for him, Islam cannot be a religion that one chooses, as it has strong roots in its geographical land. However, the Muslim ‘conquests’, which often forced Islamic conversion onto people, result in total absorption and overly rigorous application resulting in a complete way of life, which, according to Naipaul, can easily lead to ‘fundamentalism’.

The West is constructed as the driving force behind positive change. Naipaul's 'conversion to the West' needs to be considered once again: he himself 'converted' from his colonial background to Western ideas of individualism, which has served as a 'conquering force' in a similar way as Islam with its 'all-embracing' nature does now. Naipaul's examination of the notion of conversion (in relation to the past) could, therefore, be read as a self-recognition in the 'face of the other' (which is part of his former 'self' and which, in retrospect, he rejects).[27] This self-re-discovery comes especially to the fore when Naipaul examines the Muslim countries' relationship with the 'West'. He increasingly establishes his position as the privileged and more knowledgeable traveller from the West, whilst paradoxically the concept of 'the West' appears ambiguous in the context of his own colonial heritage: his origin is not as clear-cut as he seems to pretend, and the West is as 'inauthentic' as the Islam he encounters.[28] As Rana Kabbani points out, 'Naipaul feels within his rights to offer whatever descriptions suits his prejudice – for after all, he is "involved" with this East, having emerged from it and having "made good"'.[29] Naipaul's heritage – and I specifically include his experience as a migrant to Britain here – serves as a means to establish his superiority. He describes his and the West's difficult and complicated relationship with a number of non-Western countries and also describes how the West is needed especially for science and modern technology. Naipaul thus reveals notions of mimicry, of imitating the West in order to extract everything that is needed on the way of a complete Muslim way of life. However, one could argue that Naipaul is a 'mimic man' himself, someone who came from the periphery of the British Empire to its centre and aimed at immersing himself in this new culture completely.[30] Therefore, as much as the Muslim countries (as an example of formerly colonized people, 'the Other') need the West, so does the West need 'the other', Naipaul being a representative of both, 'the (former) other' and 'the West'. He also went through the experiences which Rob Nixon lists as follows: 'insecurity from a weak sense of history, the shock of modernization, dependency from the colonial era, and followed exploitation'.[31] Mimicking the West comes as a natural consequence: as John Alden Williams describes, until 1967, modernization in the former colonies comes as 'a period of imitation', then as 'a road of destruction'.[32] As a result of this disappointment in 'Western modernization', 'Islamic solidarity' is increasingly perceived 'as the correct alternative',[33] a 'conquering' alternative which might even be imposed on people who, as a consequence, will lose their individuality.

Islam had come here [to Indonesia] not long before Europe. It had not been the towering force it had been in other converted places. For the last two hundred years, in a colonial world, Islam had even been on the defensive, the religion of a subject people. It had not completely possessed the souls of people. It was still a missionary religion. (BB, p. 24)

Islam as a form of imperialism is, therefore, a destructive force as it seems to erase all traces of cultural, non-Muslim 'originality' in these countries. Once again, Naipaul uses the reference to a lack of sense for people's non-Islamic past and lack of tradition as a means to relate to his own and, implicitly, Britain's colonial past – and the differences between the positive and negative effects of both forms of imperialism: 'Step by step, out of its Islamic striving, Pakistan had undone the rule of law it had inherited from the British, and replaced it with nothing.' (AB, p. 195) Although Naipaul criticizes the colonizing effect of Islam, he almost behaves like a colonizer himself by imposing his ideas of what 'good'

colonization, the kind of colonization that he experienced, is onto the Muslims he encounters as well as onto his readers. Since colonialism has directly effected him and his present, Naipaul as an individual and a writer who believes in the 'universal civilization' mainly based on Western ideas of 'enlightenment' is at the centre of his travel accounts again. Yet overall, Naipaul seems to want to communicate that clinging too tightly to a past which is retrospectively constructed in order to purify the faith, leads to 'fundamentalism' and ultimate destruction.

This interpretation of Islam also comes to the fore when taking a closer look at 'the believers' – as individuals as well as the community of believers. For Naipaul, Islam seems almost incomprehensible and he reduces the religion to the concept of 'submission', i.e. its literal translation and a lack of individuality.

What meaning does the community of the believers have for Naipaul? I shall analyse the supposed dichotomy between individualism and the idea of the *ummah*, the community of believers, under the aspect of what Benedict Anderson calls 'Imagined Communities', societies that are constructed by the people who perceive themselves as part of these social groups.[34] Naipaul seems to reject the idea of the *ummah*. He comments on the 'internationality' of Islam – here in Pakistan – rather cynically:

It was organized; every row had a number. I was passed from person to person, snatched at one stage from a developing conversation, and taken to the foreign enclave, where there were Arabs, Indonesians, and even Africans (clearly old hands at these international Muslim gatherings, unashamedly enjoying the ethnic sensation, they and their costumes and their language were exciting). (AB, p. 245)

Naipaul gives a strong sense of dichotomy between his idea of (Western) individualism and the possibility of preserving individuality within a larger community. He seems to perceive the 'Muslim version of community' as '[f]acelessness [which] had begun to seem like an Islamic motif. [...] Individualism was to be surrendered to the saviour and avenger. But when the revolution was over, individualism – in the great city the Shah had built – was to be cherished again.' (AB, p. 28) Although coming from a Hindu background with a strong sense of community, Naipaul seems to champion a notion of individuality which focuses on the separate individual and which does not allow space for other forms of experiencing individuality.

One interesting aspect is the nomadism that Naipaul has experienced in his lifetime. This experience serves as a metaphorical 'contact zone' which is based on Naipaul's former experiences which he uses as a justification for his judgement of people: 'a peasant or nomadic longing stirred within me. [...] But what to me was the impulse of the moment was for them a way of life. I would move on, do other things; they would continue as I saw them.' (AB, p. 217) The word 'nomadic' seems to connote 'peasant', i.e. backwardness, just as Islam seems to represent a backward religion for Naipaul. However, despite the fact that Naipaul frequently acts as a traveller 'with imperial associations', as a 'former nomad' he can be regarded as a postcolonial writer with a migrant experience (he moved from the 'margin' of Empire to the metropolis London).[35] Yet he does not seem to be able to share the experience of dislocation and marginality with the Muslims he meets on his journeys.[36] He appears as a 'privileged fugitive'.[37] The

experience of migration is often the topic of the conversations he has with people. Their travelling (from country to city, to other, mainly Western, countries for education, and, historically, from 'paganism' to religion) has significant effects on the development of Islam – a notion which is frequently referred to by Naipaul. As James Clifford points out: 'if contemporary migrant populations are not to disappear as mute, passive straws in the political-economic winds, we need to listen to a wide range of "travel stories" (not "travel literature" in the bourgeois sense).'[38] Naipaul usually perceives these 'travel stories' (the life-stories of his conversation partners) with an extremely critical eye. Yet these migrations sometimes appear as a desire to reach 'civilization' which moves Naipaul further towards an intellectual 'home'. He puts great emphasis on his experiences, and thereby creates a self-imposed outsiderdom, as the following example demonstrates: 'Masood's panic now, his vision of his world as a blind alley (with his knowledge that there was activity and growth elsewhere), took me back to my own panic of thirty or thirty-five years before.' (AB, pp. 224-25) Here questions of power and the reinforcement of stereotypes come into play. According to Bhabha '[a]n important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of "fixity" in the ideological construction of otherness.'[39] In this context, the 'stereotype [...] is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always "in place", already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated'.[40] Naipaul bases the 'otherness' of the Muslims he encounters on their lack of knowledge, and his sense of self on his experience and knowledge, thus exercising (indirect) power and self-elevation.

Conclusion: Naipaul's Experience of an 'Inauthentic Islam'

Going on a journey implies a sense of literal as well as metaphorical movement. A journey that is a pilgrimage towards answers and knowledge can be influential on the traveller and writer. The focus of this article was the exploration of the version of Islam Naipaul constructs on his journeys. He perceives Islam primarily in relation to himself – both as traveller and writer.

Naipaul focuses on his role as an inquiring writer. As he primarily wants to understand why and how 'fundamentalism' came into existence, he puts himself in the position of an exploring outsider. Naipaul wants to achieve rather than experience: his aim is to gain knowledge, and his journey becomes a pilgrimage to knowledge and understanding, and indirectly to himself and towards a fixed text to be consumed later, rather than *to* Islam.

It seems, therefore, that Naipaul wants to communicate a particular form of Islam. Naipaul's conclusion is as follows: 'Islam meant "submission", and in an Islamic republic, such as the people of Iran had passionately wanted and had voted for in a referendum, everyone had to submit.' (BB, p. 163) For Naipaul, conversion triggers a (false) sense of belonging.[41] As he rarely differentiates between different (Arab as well as non-Arab) forms of Islam, he creates an 'idea Islam',[42] which is, in Orientalist fashion, primarily defined and fixed by (its) violence, fundamentalism, dependency on the West, backwardness and the unquestionable acceptance of the faith. His refusal to be open to Islam's changing nature coincides with his refusal to transform himself as a traveller and writer:[43] his texts do not give any hints of a changed, more positive and open perception of Islam. Therefore although Naipaul re-lives his travels and the experiences on these journeys through the act of writing, his ultimate aim seems to be the

production of his books rather than a genuine interaction with Islam.

Notes

[1] This article was written as part of my Ph.D. research, which is kindly supported by The Arts and Humanities Research Council. I am grateful to the Council for its support.

I would like to thank Professor Sarah Colvin (University of Edinburgh) for her insightful reading of a previous version of this article.

[2] For further information on the significance of 'the East' as a place of travel, including the Christian pilgrimage and the importance of holy places in a Christian context, see Barbara Korte, *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*, trans. by Catherine Matthias (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd/Palgrave, 2000), pp. 24-25.

[3] For a detailed discussion of the Western interest and conceptions in the Orient, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (1978, London: Penguin, 1995).

[4] V.S. Naipaul, *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among the Converted Peoples* (1998, London: Abacus, 2002) (henceforth abbreviated to 'BB'; page references refer to this edition), p. 1.

[5] Suman Gupta, *V.S. Naipaul, Writers and Their Work* (Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers, 1999), p. 67.

[6] V.S. Naipaul, 'Our Universal Civilization', in *Literary Occasions: Essays*, intro. and ed. by Pankaj Mishra (London: Picador, 2003), pp. 503-17 (p. 507).

[7] V.S. Naipaul, *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981, London: Picador, 2003) (henceforth abbreviated to 'AB'; page references refer to this edition), p. 400.

[8] Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities', in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (Routledge: London and New York, 1995), pp. 223-37 (p. 277); emphasis in original.

[9] V.S. Naipaul, 'Two Worlds (The Nobel Lecture, 07 December 2001)', in V.S. Naipaul, *Literary Occasions: Essays*, intro. and ed. by Pankaj Mishra (London: Picador, 2003), pp. 181-95 (p. 188).

[10] Naipaul, 'Our Universal Civilization', p. 508.

[11] See Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myth of Orient* (London: Pandora, 1994 [1986]), p. 37; Rob Nixon also argues that Naipaul has the 'Weltanschauung of a secular Hindu West Indian would-be-Victorian (obsessed with finding confirmation for his judgements)' (Rob Nixon, *London Calling: V.S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 45.

[12] Peter Hulme, 'Travelling to Write (1940-2000)', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 87-101 (p. 94).

[13] Naipaul, 'Our Universal Civilization', pp. 507-08.

[14] Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. xiii.

[15] John L. Esposito dismisses the term 'fundamentalism'. He 'regard[s] "fundamentalism" as too laden with Christian presuppositions and Western stereotypes, as well as implying a monolithic threat that does not exist; more fitting general terms are "Islamic revivalism" or "Islamic activism" [a term which Naipaul finds "puzzling" and therefore seemingly unsuitable], which are less value-laden and have roots within the Islamic tradition. In recent years, the terms "political Islam" and "Islamism" have become more common usage. Islam possesses a long tradition of revival (*tajdid*) and reform (*islah*) which includes notions of political and social activism dating from the early Islamic centuries to the present day. Thus I prefer to speak of Islamic revivalism and Islamic activism rather than of Islamic fundamentalism.' (John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, 3rd edn (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 6).

[16] For further details on the peculiarity of Hinduism in its diaspora, see, for example, Stephen Vertovec, *The Hindu Diaspora: Comparative Patterns* (London: Routledge, 2000), or Stephen Vertovec, *Hindu Trinidad: Religion, Ethnicity and Socio-economic Change*, Warwick University Caribbean Studies (Macmillan Academic and Professional, 1992).

[17] Naipaul, 'Our Universal Civilization', p. 509.

[18] For a discussion of notions of authenticity, see Gupta, *V.S. Naipaul*, p. 72.

[19] Naipaul, 'Our Universal Civilization', p. 512.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 511-12.

[21] Gupta, *V.S. Naipaul*, p. 72.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[23] Joan Pau Rubiés, 'Travel Writing and Ethnography', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 242-260 (p. 258).

[24] Timothy Weiss, *On the Margins: The Art of Exile in V.S. Naipaul* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), p. 148.

[25] V.S. Naipaul, 'Reading and Writing: A Personal Account', in V.S. Naipaul, *Literary Occasions: Essays*, intro. and ed. by Pankaj Mishra (London: Picador, 2003), pp. 3-31 (p. 20).

[26] Naipaul, 'Jasmine', in *Literary Occasions*, ed. and intro. by Pankaj Mishra (London: Picador, 2003), pp. 45-52 (p. 48).

[27] See Jaques Lacan's theory of the construction of identity based on 'the Other': 'For Lacan, we need the response and recognition of others and of the Other to arrive at what we experience as our identity.' (Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory: The Basics* (London and New York: Routledge), pp. 161).

[28] 'The word "authentic" has different meanings: historical (denoting the descendants of the inhabitants of the peninsula before Islamisation), biological and even racial (indicating Arab racial purity), or socio-cultural (defining a nomadic and pastoral life and economy).' (Billie Melman, 'The Middle East/Arabia: "the Cradle of Islam"', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 105-21 (p. 116))

[29] Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 130.

[30] See Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 85-92, where he discusses the 'ambivalence of mimicry', the 'almost the same, but not quite' (p. 86; emphasis in original) of the (former) colonial. Bhabha's title is derived from Naipaul's novel *The Mimic Men* which describes a former colonial's dilemma of wishing to conform to the (imperial) centre's standard and becoming part of it. Naipaul himself went through this process as he illustrates in his semi-autobiographical novel *The Enigma of Arrival*.

[31] Nixon, *London Calling*, p. 130.

[32] John Alden Williams, *The Word of Islam* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), pp. 214-15.

[33] Ibid., p. 215.

[34] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991 [1983]).

[35] Barbara Korte defines postcolonial travel writing as follows: 'as referring to travel writing produced after the Second World War by such travellers/writers whose origin is located in the world formerly colonised by Britain' (Barbara Korte, 'Exploring Without a Mission? Postcolonial Travel in a Global World', in *Colonies – Missions – Cultures in the English-Speaking World: General and Comparative Studies*, ed. by Gerhard Stilz, ZAA Studies, Language, Literature, Culture, 12 (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2001), pp. 383-95 (p. 385)).

[36] See Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 19-20.

[37] Rossana Bonadei, 'Theory into écriture: Travel Literature Encounters Touring Cultures', in *Cross-Cultural Travel: Papers from the Royal Irish Academy International Symposium on Literature and Travel, National University of Ireland, Galway, November 2002*, ed. by Jane Couroy, Travel Writing Across Disciplines, Theory and Pedagogy, 7 (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 417-28 (p. 419).

[38] James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 38.

[39] Homi K. Bhabha, 'The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism', in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 66-84. (p. 66).

[40] Ibid.

[41] See Weiss, *On the Margins*, p. 155.

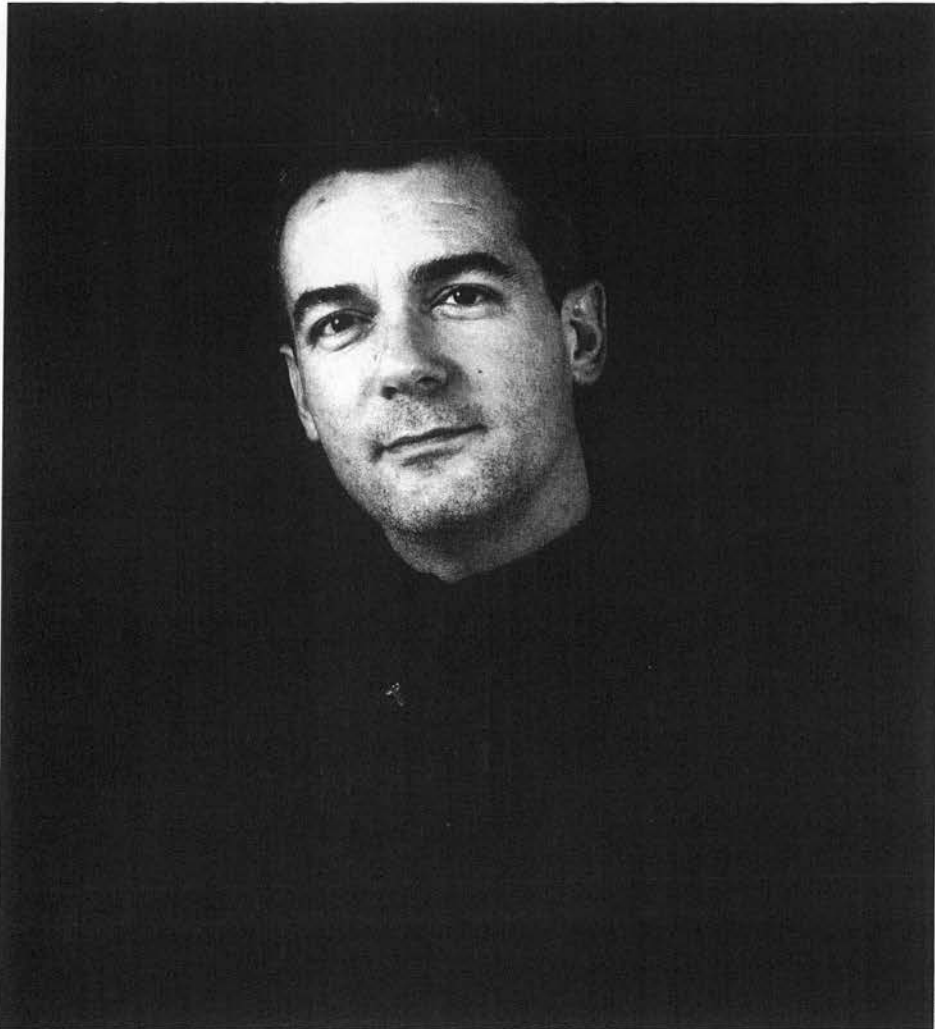
[42] See Said, *Orientalism*, p. 5: 'the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West'.

[43] See Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p. 136.

Dieser Beitrag gehört zum Schwerpunkt: Islam in Südasien .

»Die Fremde muss wie ein Stein sein«

Ilja Trojanow spricht über das Schreiben, das Reisen und seine Pilgerfahrt nach Mekka



In vielen Kulturen zu Hause: Ilja Trojanow

Ilja Trojanow, geboren 1965 in Sofia, floh mit seinen Eltern 1971 über Jugoslawien und Italien nach Deutschland. 1972 zog die Familie für mehrere Jahre nach Kenia. Von 1985 bis 89 studierte Trojanow Jura und Völkerkunde in München und arbeitete danach als Verleger afrikanischer Literatur. Von 1998 bis 2003 lebte er in Mumbai (Bombay), wo er den Islam für sich entdeckte. Seit 2003 wohnt er in Kapstadt. Für seine Romane und Reiseberichte ist er vielfach ausgezeichnet worden. Zuletzt erhielt er für »Der Weltensammler« den Preis der Leipziger Buchmesse 2006.

KREUZER: Sie sind in mehreren Kulturen und Sprachen zu Hause, schreiben aber auf Deutsch. Damit gelten Sie als Vertreter der »Migrationsliteratur«. Empfinden Sie die Bezeichnung als Diskriminierung?

ILJA TROJANOW: Ich habe nicht das Bedürfnis, irgendetwas einzuordnen. »Migrationsliteratur« ist aber wenigstens ein Begriff, der den Inhalt der Literatur, die Verschiebung von Stoffen und Themen, mitbedenkt. Aufgrund dieser Verschiebung zeigt sie die Einführung von Themen, die die Literatur bislang so noch nicht kannte. Und man merkt der deutschen Sprache die Migration an.

KREUZER: Was bedeutet die deutsche Sprache für Sie?

TROJANOW: Sie bedeutet erst einmal die wahre Heimat. Es gibt keine ehrlichere Heimat als die deutsche Sprache. Sie ist tolerant und gegenüber, bereit, sich mit uns zu verschmelzen oder etwas Neues zu schaffen. Das wäre mein An-

spruch: dass man der deutschen Sprache irgendwann einmal anmerkt, dass ich da war. Nicht weil ich verehrt werden möchte, sondern weil ich Repräsentant einer gewissen historischen Realität bin – in meinem Fall, dass Hunderttausende von Osteuropäern in den Jahren des Kalten Krieges nach Deutschland kamen.

KREUZER: Was bedeutet in diesem Zusammenhang Heimat für Sie?

TROJANOW: Heimat ist für mich kein interessanter Begriff, weil Heimat so intim, persönlich ist. Sie ist nichts anderes als eine Art emotionaler Fingerabdruck jedes Menschen. Ich bin überzeugt, dass Heimat mit den Menschen beginnt, die einem wichtig sind, Familie, Freunde, Umfeld. Außerdem ist Heimat Ausdruck der biografischen Verbindung. Wenn man genauer hinsieht, ist Hei-

mat nur ein riesengroßes Flimmern und insofern nicht so nützlich, um irgendetwas auszusagen.

KREUZER: Sie haben an der Hadsch teilgenommen, der Pilgerreise, die jeder Muslim einmal in seinem Leben gemacht haben sollte. Haben Sie da nicht doch so etwas wie Heimat erfahren?

TROJANOW: Ja, die Stärke einer Pilgerreise wie der Hadsch besteht darin, dass man mit anderen zusammenlebt. Man lernt, dass Brüderlichkeit wirklich ein Wert sein kann. Man weiß, dass man sich im Mittelpunkt einer Gemeinschaft von Leuten befindet. Das Geniale am islamischen Gebet ist, dass sich alle an einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt wie Kreise um diesen Mittelpunkt, die Kaaba, aufbauen. Das ist eine Erfahrung, die das gemeinschaftliche Gefühl unter Moslems verstärkt.

KREUZER: In Ihrem Buch »Zu den Heiligen Quellen des Islam« schildern Sie das ja und erklären, dass Sie es geschrieben haben, um die Hadsch noch einmal zu erleben.

TROJANOW: Nach der Hadsch verliert man sehr schnell die Ergriffenheit, die man dort gespürt hat. Wenn man aber das Gefühl der spirituellen Berührung so schnell verliert, dann stimmt irgendetwas nicht mit der Idee, dass man nun als anderer Mensch den Rest seines Lebens verbringt. Da war es eine richtige Beglückung, dass ich aus der Phase des Zweifels zurückkehren konnte und das ganze Erlebnis der Ekstase, der Überraschung, der Erfüllung noch einmal schreibend erleben konnte. Ich habe bewusst versucht, das Buch nicht aus dem Blickpunkt desjenigen, der ich war, als ich es geschrieben habe, zu schreiben, sondern mir diese teilweise unwissende oder halbweisende Offenheit und Neugier, mit der ich das Ganze begangen habe, zu vergegenwärtigen.

KREUZER: Wie beschreiben Sie Ihr Verhältnis zu Schreiben und Reisen?

TROJANOW: Meine Poetologie entwickelt sich aus dem Reisen. Eine bestimmte Art von Reisen bedingt eine bestimmte Art der Wahrnehmung, und diese hat einen bestimmten Stil zur Folge. Meine Art des Reisens ist nicht das geografische Verschlingen von Orten, Gegenden und Menschen, sondern der Versuch einer beständigen Verschmelzung, der Versuch, Fremde zu etwas Eigenem zu machen, ohne sie für sich selbst zu zerstören, indem man sie vereinfacht, etikettiert. Elefanten schlucken Steine zur Verdauung. Die Fremde muss so wie ein Stein sein: Sie hilft einem, die Realität zu verdauen, andererseits muss sie

»Es gibt keine ehrlichere Heimat als die deutsche Sprache«

aber auch schwer im Magen liegen. Wenn sie das nicht tut, hat man es sich zu einfach gemacht und die Fremde zerstört. Das ist eine lebenslange Suche, ein lebenslanges Kämpfen, um einen eigenen Weg. Reisen ist auch ein Lernprozess. Jede Reise, bei der man nichts gelernt hat, ist eine vergebene Reise.

INTERVIEW: FRAUKE MATTHES



> Frauke Matthes, geboren 1978 in Leipzig, promovierte an der University of Edinburgh über die Wahrnehmung des Islam und der muslimischen Welt in zeitgenössischer deutscher und englischsprachiger Literatur.

used metaphorically. I am interested in how these notions of translation are intertwined. My focus is the interrelation between language and place: I will ask how language can become an expression of place, and in what way literal as well as metaphorical translation processes influence the formation of a concept of "home".

I am borrowing the idea from Walter Benjamin that "in a translation, something other than reproduction of meaning" is to be aimed at (1996, 259). Translation transfers not only the signifiers of a language but also whole cultural concepts. In this sense, the act of translation makes the interrelation between languages and cultures visible (see Benjamin 1996, 255), and, according to Gayatri Spivak, "allow[s] us to make sense of things, of ourselves . . . [and] making sense of ourselves is what produces identity." (1992, 177) If one sees "translation . . . as the most intimate act of reading" then the "reading" of cultures, which I understand as an openness to "the Other" as well as an openness to permitting change in "the self", is the essence of cultural translation processes (Spivak 1992, 181).

The concept of identity is therefore at the centre of translation processes.ⁱⁱⁱ In the context of Özdamar's novel, I perceive identity as a fluid concept: her migrants regularly face changing surroundings and circumstances that challenge "older" aspects of their identities, and encourage them to let new cultural experiences transform and develop their identities. This transformation depends, however, on what the migrants want to incorporate into their ever-changing identities. Hence they can choose what influences them—at least to some extent. Expectations from the "home" culture and gender roles also contribute to the process of identity formation, and might limit the migrants' openness to the new environment. Identity is also constructed in the face of "the Other,"^{iv} which might reinforce differences as a means of (re-)defining identity. In whatever way the novel's characters perceive themselves, their identity is an "identity in transformation" (Chambers 1994, 24), an ongoing identification process which is reinforced by their peripatetic lifestyle (Bhabha in Rutherford 1990, 211). The situation of migration is instructive because it draws attention to identity transformation processes emerging out of literal movements.

As Michaela Wolf points out, "translation [is] also a place where cultures merge and create new spaces" (2002, 186). In Homi K. Bhabha's terms, these spaces can be described as "Third Spaces" where "other", non-conventional voices are heard, and linguistic and cultural diversity, heteroglossia and hybridity, are expressed. However, hybridity "is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures . . . in a dialectical play of 'recognition'" (Bhabha 1994a,

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DEFINING "HOME": CULTURAL TRANSLATION AS SELF-EXPLORATION IN EMINE SEVGI ÖZDAMAR'S *DAS LEBEN IST EINE KARAWANSEREI*

FRAUKE MATTHES

Introduction: Translation and Migration

The notion of translation evokes ideas of movements between and across languages and cultures. Translation as a "journey" is part of the constant transformational processes of nomadic people, who negotiate common grounds yet also differences between the languages and cultures they meet and possibly adopt while travelling. Thus "nomadic writers", writers of diverse cultural backgrounds such as German-Turkish writers like Emine Sevgi Özdamar, are generally perceived as cultural mediators. Özdamar's novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* / *hat zwei Türen / aus einer kam ich rein / aus der anderen ging ich raus* (1992)ⁱ depicts cultural translation processes as the result of its Turkish child-I-narrator's literal migrations within her country. These journeys feed into the metaphorical journey of her self-exploration and search for a "home".

Emine Sevgi Özdamar was born in Turkey where she frequently moved around, but she has lived first as a *Gastarbeiterin* (guest worker) then as an actor, theatre director and writer in Germany for almost forty years. In her semi-autobiographical novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*, cultural translation is the process by which Özdamar's protagonist translates the unknown or unfamiliar of the Turkey in which she and her family move around into something understandable: this movement will eventually define her as a migrant.

Cultural translation—the translation between cultures in real life—involves similar mental processes as translations between languages on paper. The former is an everyday extension of the latter whereby the term "translation" is

113-14). Out of those persisting tensions, identities as well as homes are constantly re-defined. The "in-between" is thus a temporal construction (see Bhabha 1994b, 148), which is constantly subject to new interpretations and negotiations. It therefore does not come as a surprise that, as Annette Wierschke puts it in a question directed to Özdamar, "for you to be at home means to be on a train or on the way" (1994, 259).^v The novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* depicts such a life "on a train". The caravanserai, a motel-type inn for travellers in desert regions of Asia and North Africa that traditionally has no doors, serves as a metaphor for Özdamar's narrator's life. Not only does the book open and end with her literal being-on-a-train, it also describes the metaphorical journey of a girl who finds herself among Turkey's diverse languages and cultures, Muslim as well as folk traditions and an outlook towards "the West" (see Fischer and McGowan 1996, 17). I read the novel as an unusual form of *Bildungsroman* that draws the picture of a heterogeneous Turkey through the eyes of its young narrator. In her culturally and linguistically diverse environment, the girl is trying to find a place and space where she can grow up.

In this sense, *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* deliberately takes up the idea of the "in-between" as a place of negotiation, construction and translation. Two major factors influence these processes: firstly, the constant house-moving of the narrator's family and, connected with this existence on the move, the different roles she has to adopt every time she arrives in a new place; and, secondly, her Arabic Islamic heritage. How does Özdamar's narrator apply translation processes in order to re-define herself and her "home" in new places?

The Relation Between Place and Language

The theme of *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*, an "inner migration" (Brunner 1999, 562) (the migration within one country, Turkey), is already introduced by the narrator's observations in her sixteen-year-old mother's womb. They are on their way from Istanbul to Malatya in Anatolia, her birthplace. Due to the father's constant unemployment and debts, the family is forced to move around Turkey. Eventually, the narrator takes a train to Germany to start a new life as a *Gastarbeiterin* (guest worker). On the basis of the family's peripatetic lifestyle the notion of home cannot be spatially defined, but is rather a form of emotional stability which is only provided by her family.

Throughout her life, the narrator experiences Turkey as a heterogeneous place which is primarily defined by difference. The most prominent difference is between urban and rural Turkey: as Wierschke points out, "Istanbul defines itself in opposition to the rural Anatolian countryside. . . . Anatolia as negative

is exactly the counterpart, 'the other' which Istanbul is not and does not want to be." (1994, 184)^{vi} In this context, Anatolia is often associated with a more traditional lifestyle. The narrator experiences this dichotomy when she enters school in Istanbul. As a child who was born in rural Anatolia and thus an outsider she is discriminated against and has to face prejudices that are based on her origin.

Die Lehrerin fragte alle nach ihrem Namen und danach, wo sie geboren waren.

Ich sagte: "Ich bin in Anatolien in Malatya geboren." Die Lehrerin sagte: "Dann bist du Kurdin, du hast einen Schwanz an deinem Arsch." Dann lachte sie, alle anderen lachten auch und nannten mich: "Kurdin mit Schwanz." Ab dann saß ich ganz hinten. . . . (*Karawanserei*, 37)^{vii}

Not only is the narrator made to feel different by being laughed at, but she is also spatially divided from the other children who have learned to share the teacher's (and society's) prejudices. This kind of education has a major influence on the narrator, and she begins to internalize this discrimination by increasingly perceiving her birthplace Malatya as an "alien" place, which is also reflected in the use of language. As part of this changing attitude towards her origin, she (and even more so her mother) yearns for acceptance in Istanbul (the modern metropolis)—an aspiration reflected in the wish to speak "pure" Turkish. Language becomes an expression of place—and sometimes even of home. After a holiday with her grandfather in Malatya she returns to Istanbul speaking "impure" Turkish exemplified by the different pronunciation of the significant word "mother":

Ich öffnete meine Arme und schrie: "Mutter!" . . . Meine Mutter stand mir gegenüber, aber ich konnte sie nicht umarmen. Zwischen uns stand eine Mauer aus dem fremden Dialekt, den ich aus dieser anatolischen Stadt unter meiner Zunge mitgebracht hatte. Meine Mutter sagte: "Sprich nicht so, du mußt wieder istanbultürkisch, sauberes Türkisch sprechen, verstehst du, in zwei Tagen fängt die Schule wieder an. Wenn du so anatolisch sprichst, werden alle zu dir Bauer sagen, verstehst du. So sprich doch istanbulisch." Ich machte wieder meine Arme auf, sagte: "Mutter-Anacugum." Meine Mutter sagte: "Sag: Anneciğim! Nicht Anacugum." Ich sagte: "Anacugum." . . . Die beiden Wörter fochten in der Mitte des Zimmers . . . So mußte ich . . . Strafe zahlen. Für meine Wörter, die ich aus der Stadt, wo meine Mutter und ich geboren wurden, mitgebracht hatte. So schnitten mir Istanbuler Messer mein Anacugum rasch zu Anneciğim. (*Karawanserei*, 53-54)^{viii}

The differences in the pronunciation of the word "mother" signal a distancing from her direct background, her mother, who wishes to conform to an "urban" standard. The narrator seems to come closer to her original home again, which is

symbolized by the Anatolian dialect she has adopted. This "linguistic gulf"—this confusion inside the narrator—triggers her search for something else that is more in tune with herself (see Horrocks 1996, 28). Her longing results in her departure from Turkey at the end of the novel. Yet this search is infused with confusion regarding other people's perceptions of her origin. In Yenişehir, for instance, she is seen as the intelligent girl from Istanbul.^{ix} As the narrator experiences how her and other people's perceptions of herself and Turkey change while growing up amidst different "Turkeys", she learns to understand "home" as a hybrid concept that is comprised of a variety of cultural, linguistic and religious influences, and is therefore constantly (re-)created. However, this process is a painful one, and the narrator *is* looking for stability amidst her movements.

One form of stability is provided by the narrator's cultural and linguistic heritage. Particularly Arabic serves as a vehicle for negotiating one part of Turkey's cultural past and its religion in the narrator's present and thus as a means of her self-development. Experiencing Arabic in everyday as well as religious life, the narrator perceives the former as part of a hybrid Ottoman heritage which gives meaning to her present hybrid situation (see Wierschke 1994, 163).

This process of giving meaning to her hybrid present is, for instance, reflected in recapturing tales told by her grandparents. On a train trip to Eastern Anatolia, for example, her grandfather explains Turkish history according to his subjective perception. He is "spinning a yarn" symbolized by his beard that grows and turns into a carpet. It becomes the scene where stories—ranging from the history of the Ottoman Empire to present-day Turkey—take place.

Großvater sprach, und sein unrasierter Bart wuchs aus seinem Gesicht, und der Bart fing an, einen Teppich zu weben. . . . Am Anfang des Teppichs schnitte es auf den Bergen. Auf denen lief mein Großvater als ein sehr junger Mann mit einem sehr jungen Mädchen und mit vielen Tieren. . . . Auf dem Teppich baute der Bismarck die Bagdadbahn bis zu den Ölfeldern durch die Türkei, und beim Durchbauen sah Bismarck die Stadt Pergamon und fragte höflich den Sultan
(*Karawanserei*, 38-39)^x

The grandfather eccentrically "weaves" history into "part fantasy, part farce", which is not necessarily based on "accepted facts" or the truthful representation of chronology and characters (Horrocks 1996, 28-29). Some critics read this passage as an example of the "oriental" tradition of story-telling.^{xi} However, with reference to Edward W. Said's analysis of *Orientalism*, this assumption "threatens to stereotype her [Özdamar] as an author working within a more

primitive oral culture, which is attractive precisely because it is different from Western written culture with its supposedly rationalistic emphasis." (Horrocks 1996, 30) Instead this version of story-telling—the combination of different heritages—is yet another demonstration of Turkey's heterogeneity, specifically in terms of history, religion and culture. Not only do these stories become part of the narrator's "oriental" heritage, her "past", they also give meaning to her present hybrid situation. By being made aware of her country's history by her grandfather, she is able to situate herself in present-day Turkey. I regard this as another chronological form of cultural translation, one which familiarizes the narrator with an unknown past in order to explore her occasionally confusing present.

The narrator perceives Arabic as the language which heavily influences her religious and cultural background. A case in point are certain expressions such as *Maşallah* ("whatever God wishes") and *Inşallah* ("God willing") that are used ritualistically rather than fully comprehended. Hardly any of the characters know what these phrases actually mean, and the narrator looks them up at the age of eighteen. The monotonous repetition of the expression *Bismillâhiraḥmanirrahim* ("in the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful"), for instance, exemplifies this abstract familiarity with her heritage. It is primarily uttered as part of the daily routine.

Großmutter sprach diese arabischen Wörter, die wie eine Kamelkarawane hintereinander liefen, in meine Augen guckend, in ihrem Kapadokia-Dorfdialekt. Die Kamelkarawane sammelte sich in meinem Mund, ich sprach die Gebete mit Großmutter, so hatten wir zwei Kamelkarawanen, ihre Kamele, die größer waren als meine, nahmen meine vor ihre Beine und brachten meinen Kamelen das Laufen bei. Beim Sitzen wackelten wir auch wie Kamele, und ich sprach:

"*Bismillâhiraḥmanirrahim*

....

Amin."

Ich wußte nicht, was diese Wörter sagten, vielleicht Großmutter Ayşe auch nicht. Das Wort Bismillâhiraḥmanirrahim kam aus den Mündern von vielen Menschen. Man mußte, wenn man ins Haus trat, mit dem rechten Fuß auftreten und dabei Bismillâhiraḥmanirrahim sagen. (*Karawanserei*, 55-56; italics in original)^{xii}

From her naïve point of view, the narrator experiences the Arabic language as a list of visual objects consisting of beautifully drawn letters: she translates the Arabic words into pictures (caravans of camels) which bear resemblance to the Arabic calligraphy that the girl is probably familiar with from visits to the mosque or illustrations in books. Her grandmother serves as a teacher: her bigger camels (her spoken Arabic words) teach her granddaughter's camels how

to walk (how to pronounce the Arabic words). As this process takes place, the bond between grandmother and granddaughter seems to grow stronger, just as Arabic expressions "serv[e] in a quasi-ritualistic fashion to bind a community together" (Horrocks 1996, 26). Furthermore, these expressions retain "something of that submission to God's will that is central to the whole notion of Islam" (Horrocks 1996, 26). Although in a predominantly secular family like the narrator's Islam does not play a central role any more, it is still always present, if not fully comprehended, in language, which signifies an unconscious rather than a conscious experience of Islam. The repeated pronunciation of Arabic words as part of a religious ritual draws attention to the narrator's "emphasis on sound rather than meaning" (Bird 2003, 188 and 187). The association of those sounds and events with memories connected with the praying with her grandmother, for example, seems to be more important than the actual meaning of the Arabic words. The narrator connotes the Arabic language with familiarity, even an emotional "home" represented by her grandmother, rather than religious significance, which will never play a major part in the narrator's life.

However, this passage should be read with the knowledge that until the mid-1920s Turkish was written in Arabic script. Since Atatürk's westernizing reforms Turkish has been written in Latin script, which, on the one hand, suited the Turkish language better, yet, on the other hand, also meant a break with Turkey's literary and cultural history.^{xiii} As she demonstrates an abstract familiarity with her Islamic heritage by consciously presenting its customs, the narrator shows the "unbridgeable gap in cultural continuity" (Seyhan 1996, 423). However, she acts as a linking factor, a translator, who is able to mediate between part of Turkey's religio-cultural heritage—here in the form of the Arabic language—and its transformation in her present "home" without giving preference to one over the other.

Yet this form of cultural hybridity is not always reflected upon. At times, Arabic is also unconsciously incorporated into everyday Turkish. This is taken to an extreme by the constant repetition of the "idiom used when one person suggests something and another responds in the affirmative" (Horrocks 1996, 27), "Tamam mı" (OK?)—"Tamam" (OK!), which plays a vital role in communication, especially between the narrator and her brother Ali. This idiom is employed even more unconsciously than Arabic words of prayer: when the narrator prays she knows that she pronounces Arabic words that she does not understand, but she—probably like most Turkish native speakers—does not seem to be aware of the fact that the supposedly Turkish expression "Tamam" is of Arabic origin.^{xiv} Turkish speakers have completely appropriated it as a

Turkish word, which implies a sense of linguistic completeness: if Arabic words have remained in the Turkish language after its reform, then their origin is often not recognizable. Yet "Tamam"—like a number of both recognizable and unrecognizable Arabic words—also plays a ritualistic role in the protagonist's life.

Wenn Ali Tamam mi sagte, sagte ich immer Tamam. In den Nächten weckte mich Ali und sagte: "Wir stehen auf, ich muß pinkeln, du läufst vor mir, tamam mi?" "Tamam", sagte ich. Manchmal sprangen die fremden Katzen aus dem Balkon zur Treppe, Ali sagte: "Hab keine Angst, tamam mi." "Tamam", sagte ich leise. (*Karawanserei*, 185)^{xv}

Although the narrator understands the use of these Turkish words, this particular expression seems to be employed in a similar way to the Arabic words of prayer. Because of her inability to establish a connection between Arabic and Turkish, she uses them as part of a routine rather than a conscious decision regarding what to say next. In this sense, translation processes do not take place. Instead the narrator's different parts of her cultural background are accumulated in the hybridity of the word "Tamam": a differentiation between them is neither no longer required nor necessarily possible.

The narrator demonstrates that she does not have a fixed "linguistic home", but that she moves between languages and their associated cultures to create her own version of "home" instead. The novel depicts her as a migrant between a number of versions of Turkey, yet also as a migrant who is always drawn to the outside and the future, to a life beyond her immediate experiences, in order to secure (her inner) stability. The freedom she enjoys when playing with boys in Bursa can be read as an early sign for her migration, for her distancing of herself from her heritage, which results in her leaving for Germany at the age of nineteen. This migration to a new country also brings the novel to an open ending. The narrator tells us, "Ich lief hinter den Jungen und dem Himmelsgürtel her, unsere heilige Brücke lief mehr und mehr weg von mir . . ." (*Karawanserei*, 143-44)^{xvi} The narrator is clearly desperate for a change. She runs away from her "home", yet simultaneously feels that Turkey also withdraws itself from her. (The "holy bridge" runs away). The "solution" to her discontent—the migration to another country—is read with a positive, yet not romanticized or mystified connotation. As migration presents people with different cultures and ways of living, it opens the narrator's eyes for her existence as a Turkish migrant.

Conclusion: Towards a Definition of "Home"

The novel *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* denies the myth of a fixed home. Instead (Konuk 2001, 84).^{xvii} It creates a global, or here rather Turkish, hybrid. Identity is thus regarded as linguistic and cultural plurality, and constant change, which, after a painful learning process, is positively connoted. In this sense, Özdamar describes "life as a place where one stays for a little while and then leaves it again. . . . Many people come and go like in a caravanserai. It constantly changes guests." (qtd. in Wierschke 1994, 249)^{xviii} These guests, along with the movement of "passing through", form our identity as "discontinuities" and "bridges" (Müller 1997, 136 and 143-44). I define the novel's protagonist's—literal and metaphorical—migrations as a chance to negotiate multiple identities based on complicated translation processes and the (deliberate) ambiguities they leave behind. This enables her to develop her own version of a literal as well as emotional "home", a home situated in movement rather than in a particular place. Although "the question of significance, meaning, and understanding between different cultural languages" (Seyhan 1996, 424) is complicated and not easy to grasp, it only contributes to the narrator's heterogeneous lifestyle. While she is consciously dealing with her Arabic Islamic heritage, she discovers the hybrid components of her identity and even adds another one by spatially, yet not emotionally leaving it behind to migrate to Germany. Not only does the narrator demonstrate how migrants can perceive their migrations as a form of ongoing (self-)transformation and identification, but also how they can abandon the notion of loss in translation.

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ⁱ This article was written as part of my Ph.D. research, which is kindly supported by The Arts and Humanities Research Council. I am grateful to the Council for its support. I would like to thank Professor Sarah Colvin (University of Edinburgh) for her insightful reading of this article.

ⁱⁱ Translation: *Life Is a Caravanserai / Has Two Doors / I came In One / I Went Out the Other*.

ⁱⁱⁱ See various theories on identity formation such as Judith Butler's idea of performativity (see "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" (1990), in *The Judith Butler Reader*, ed. Sara Salih with Judith Butler, 118-37 (Malden, MA, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2004)), or Jacques Lacan's theory of the construction of identity based on an "Other" (see "The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious," repr. in *Modern Criticism and Theory*, ed. David Lodge, 79-106 (Longman: London, 1988)).

^{iv} See particularly Lacan. This idea is also addressed by Homi K. Bhabha regarding the relationship between colonizer and colonized ("The Commitment to Theory," in *The Location of Culture*, 19-39 (London and New York: Routledge, 1994)).

^v My translation of: "zu Hause ist für Sie im Zug oder auf dem Weg".

^{vi} My translation of: "İstanbul definiert sich in Abgrenzung zur ländlichen anatolischen Provinz. . . . Als Negativ ist Anatolien genau das Gegenteil, genau 'das Andere': das, was Istanbul nicht ist und nicht sein will."

^{vii} Trans.: "The teacher asked everyone for their name and where they were born. I said, 'I was born in Anatolia, in Malatya.' The teacher said, 'Then you're a Kurd, you have a tail growing on your ass.' She laughed, all the others laughed too, and called me 'Kurd with a tail.' From then on I sat at the back. . . ." (*Caravanserai*, 23)

^{viii} Trans.: "I opened my arms and yelled, 'Mother!' . . . My mother stood facing me, but I couldn't put my arms around her. Between us stood a wall made of the strange dialect I had brought back under my tongue from the Anatolian city. My mother said, 'Don't talk like that, you have to speak İstanbul Turkish, clean Turkish, again, understand, school starts in two days. If you use that Anatolian dialect, they'll all call you peasant, understand? So speak İstanbul Turkish.' I opened my arms again, said, 'Mother-Anacugum.' My mother said, 'Say Anneciğim! Not Anacugum.' I said, 'Anacugum.' . . . The two words were locked in battle in the middle of the room. . . . By evening I'd paid three lira . . . in fines. For the words I brought back from the city where my mother and I were born. That's how İstanbul knives quickly trimmed my Anacugum to Anneciğim." (*Caravanserai*, 35-36)

^{ix} See *Caravanserei*, 68 / *Caravanserai*, 48.

^x Trans.: "Grandfather began to speak and his unshaven beard started growing on his face, and the beard began to weave a carpet. . . ."

At the beginning of the carpet it was snowing in the mountains. My grandfather was walking through the mountains as a very young man with a very young girl and many animals. . . . Now Bismarck was building the Baghdad railway on the carpet, to the Turkish oil fields, and on his way Bismarck saw the city of Pergamon and politely asked the Sultan. . . ." (*Caravanserai*, 24)

^{xi} See reviews reprinted in *Klagenfurter Texte: Ingeborg-Bachmann-Wettbewerb 1991*. Mit Texten der Preisträger Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Urs Allemann, Marcel Beyer, ed. Heinz Felsbach and Siegfried Metelko, 147-81 (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 1991). Özdamar won the "Ingeborg-Bachmann-Preis" for a passage from *Das Leben ist eine Karavanserei* which included the "carpet scene".

^{xii} Trans.: "Looking into my eyes and speaking her Kapadokia village dialect, Grandmother spoke Arabic words that followed each other like a caravan of camels. The caravan of camels collected in my mouth, I spoke the prayers with Grandmother, and so we had two caravans of camels, her camels which were larger than mine, placed them in front, and taught my camels to walk. Sitting there, we swayed like camels too, and I said, 'Bismillāhrahmanirrahim . . .'"

Amin."

I didn't know what these words meant, maybe grandmother Ayşe didn't know either. But the word bismillāhrahmanirrahim came from the mouths of many people. When you stepped into a house, you had to put down your right foot first and at the same time say bismillāhrahmanirrahim." (*Caravanserai*, 37-38)

^{xiii} For more detailed information on the Turkish language reform see Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success*. Oxford Linguistics, 2nd edn (Oxford and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002).

^{xiv} I would like to thank Dr Elisabeth Kendall (University of Edinburgh) for this comment.

^{xv} Trans.: "When Ali said tamam mi, I said tamam. At night Ali would wake me up and say, 'We're getting up, I have to pee, you go ahead of me, tamam mi?'" 'Tamam,' I said. Sometimes cats we didn't know would jump off the balcony onto the stairs. Ali said, 'Don't be scared, tamam mi.' 'Tamam,' I whispered." (*Caravanserai*, 141-42)

^{xvi} Trans.: "I ran after the boys and the skybelt, our holy bridge ran farther and farther away from me. . . ." (*Caravanserai*, 108)

^{xvii} My translation of: "das Leben ist ein Moment in der Bewegung."

^{xviii} My translation of: "das Leben als ein Ort, wo man ein bißchen bleibt und dann wieder weggeht. Ja, und dann kommen viele Figuren rein und raus, wie in der Karavanserei. Sie wechselt dauernd Gäste."

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“Was deutsch ist, bestimmen wir.”¹ Definitions of (Turkish-) Germanness in Feridun Zaimoğlu’s *Kanaka Sprak* and *Koppstoff*

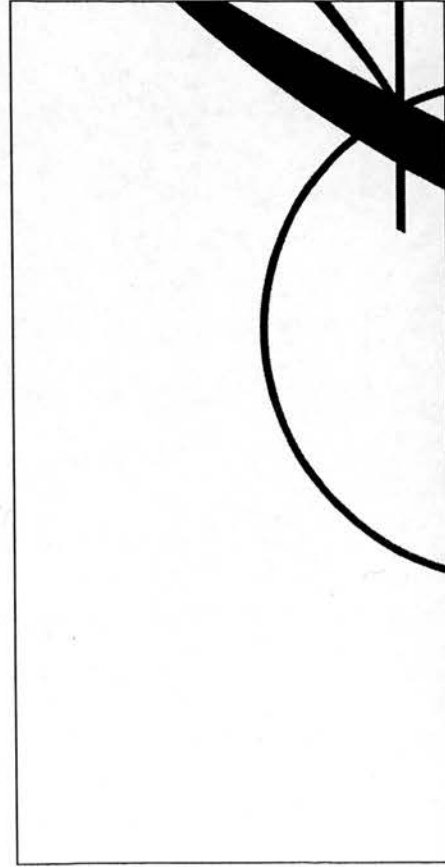
FRAUKE MATTHES

Introduction

Children of former *Gastarbeiter* are still often perceived as “Turks” or “foreigners.” They do not seem to be granted a German identity and largely remain at the margins of German society. However, while these prescribed margins are, on the one hand, not accepted, they are, on the other, embraced by those in the German Turkish community who challenge and, consequently, redefine the “center” of the German mainstream they are living amongst.

This article² focuses on the self-portrayal of young male and female German Turks in “Kanakistan, einem unbekannten Landstrich am Rande der deutschen Gesellschaft,” as Feridun Zaimoğlu puts it in his *Kanaka Sprak: 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (1995) (2). This collection of “protocols” of allegedly authentic interviews with German Turks and its female pendent, *Koppstoff: Kanaka Sprak vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (1998), center around young German Turkish men and women whose identity is often rendered as being “different.” As a result, they often see themselves as angry young men and women in an essentially “foreign” environment.³

In this article, I ask whether the “oppositional discursive strategy” of Zaimoğlu’s interlocutors, their verbal expression of deliberate “difference,” is part of the re-definition of (Turkish-) Germanness, and, if so, how (Huggan 20). I argue that Zaimoğlu’s characters appropriate their position at the “margins of society” beyond general perceptions of Germanness and Turkishness. I thereby examine how the female *Kanaka* and the male *Kanaken* (and with these terms I follow Zaimoğlu’s generalization of his interviewees) create their own spaces of belonging, with a particular focus on language and performativity.



As "Foreigners" Among and Against the "German Mainstream"

Judith Butler's exploration of (gender) performativity serves as a valuable tool to describe how these young German Turks redefine their identities. The notion of acting out a particular role is significant here. According to Butler, "[p]erformativity is [...] not a singular 'act,' for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition" (*Bodies That Matter* 12). The young men and women portrayed in *Kanak Sprak* and *Koppstoff* tend to struggle against the mainstream's perception of them within normative roles such as that of "the exotic Oriental" or "foreigner," or the radical, young Muslim and the submissive, veil-wearing Turkish woman. Yet they are also aware of their situation at the margins of society and consciously deal with these margins by re-appropriating and subverting those prescribed roles.⁴ On the one hand, these German Turks perceive margins as a bygone experience – they have forced their way into the centre (the consciousness of the mainstream) – on the other hand, they purposefully use these margins as a liberated position from where they can challenge the "center."

Zaimoğlu's group of German Turks or Turkish Germans rejects margins as an exoticizing element. I use the terms "German Turks" and "Turkish Germans" interchangeably, and I use them in order to differentiate the men and women Zaimoğlu interviewed from "mainstream Germans." I am aware of the complexity of this, as any, dichotomy, but will refer to it throughout this article as it is also applied in *Kanak Sprak* and *Koppstoff*. The writer makes the problematic issue of the margin explicit by describing a variety of German Turks in his preface "Kanak Sprak" to his first volume. Here Zaimoğlu lists the different roles *Kanak* can play and breaks the group that the German mainstream superficially perceives as a collective group of "foreigners" or "Turks" into subgroups and individuals:

Über einen Zeitraum von zwölf Monaten gelang es mir, das Spektrum weit zu öffnen: vom Müllabfuhr-Kanaken bis zum Kümme-Transsexuellen, vom hehlenden Klein-Ganef, dessen Geschenke ich nur mühsam zurückweisen konnte, bis zum goldbehängten Mädchenhändler, vom posenreichen Halbstarke bis

zum mittelschweren Islamisten. Sie alle eint das Gefühl [sic], "in der Liga der Verdammten zu spielen", gegen kulturhegemoniale Ansprüche bestehen zu müssen. Noch ist das tragende Element dieser Community ein negatives Selbstbewußtsein, wie es in der scheinbaren Selbstbezüglichung seinen oberflächlichen Ausdruck findet: Kanak! Dieses verunglimpfende Hetzwort wird zum identitätsstiftenden Kennwort, zur verbindenden Klammer dieser "Lumpenethnie". Analog zur Black-consciousness-Bewegung in den USA werden sich die einzelnen Kanak-Subidentitäten zunehmend übergreifender Zusammenhänge und Inhalte bewußt. Die Entmystifizierung ist eingeleitet, der Weg zu einem neuen Realismus gelegt. Inmitten der Mainstreamkultur entstehen die ersten rohen Entwürfe für eine ethnizistische Struktur in Deutschland. (*Kanak Sprak* 16-7)

I read Zaimoğlu's allegedly anthropological approach and ethnicization of the *Kanak* as a deliberate form of subversion: it is the beginning of the self-imposed exclusivity that many of the *Kanak* aim at because they do not want to be mistaken for mainstream Germans or for assimilated Turks.

However, *Kanak* is not an exclusive term for German-Turks and can include everybody who is politically active in race-related issues. As Tom Cheesman has argued:

"Kanak" is a parody identity, a flagrantly artificial and intentionally slippery construct: Zaimoğlu denies that only 'Turkish Germans' or 'German Turks,' or only 'ethnically non-German' German denizens and citizens can be "Kanak" or "Kanakstas" [which is a combination of the words "Kanak" and "gangster," thus emphasizing the "fight"-aspect of this identity; F.M.]. Instead it is a political category: "Viele Deutsche sind Kanakstas. Du bist in dem Moment Kanaksta, wo du die Gesellschaft durchschaust." The launch of "Kanak" as a cultural label aimed to make visible the artificiality and rigidity of the conventionally ascribed identities derived from the history of colonialism and of post-colonial migrations. (187)

Being of Turkish origin himself, Zaimoğlu seems to focus on German-Turks in *Kanak Sprak* and *Koppstoff*. They are all united in the struggle against cultural hegemony which gradually transforms a negative self-perception into a positive one. Stuart Hall points out that "it is always about shifting the balance of power in the relations of culture; it is always about changing the dispositions and the configurations of cultural power, not getting out of it" (468). The *Kanaken* shift this power by breaking "(Turkish-) German culture" into subidentities.⁵ This is based on the fight against "Multikulturalism" (the "Kanak Sprak" term for "multiculturalism") (*manifesto* of "Kanak Attak" 1).⁶ The *Kanaken* therefore criticize homogenizing tendencies amongst both the mainstream and any subculture.⁷

Part of this subversion process is the re-appropriation of the term *Kanake*. Similarly to the term *nigger*, it is usually used pejoratively to describe a gap between "foreigners" and the mainstream (for the *Kanaken*, this is the German mainstream). However, Zaimoğlu as well as most of his interlocutors, redefine this term as a means of expressing a proud difference from the German population. In the Hawaiian/Polynesian language *kanaka* means human being or man, and denotes the native population of the South Sea Islands (particularly New Caledonia).⁸ During immigration processes to Germany, the German word *Kanake* gained a derogatory meaning and now refers to immigrants and foreigners, originally of Italian, Greek and Spanish descent, but is now more commonly used against immigrants of Turkish and Arab descent.⁹ Similarly, the word *Kümmel* (derived from the pejorative expression *Kümmeltürke*), which seemingly restricts the identity of German Turks to their allegedly high consumption of cumin, is deliberately used to ridicule this perception of Turks as people who strongly smell of spices. I also regard "Fremdländer" as opposed to the more commonly used "Ausländer" as a deliberate form of protest: *Kanaken* who use this word make the mainstream aware of its deliberate and ridiculous detachment from people of a "different" background. Yet despite the fact that Zaimoğlu freely appropriates these terms to "label" the young German Turks he supposedly interviewed, some *Kanaken* have identified potential problems with this specific form of identification: it is still often perceived as a racist term and thus an insult.¹⁰

Furthermore, some German Turks feel that their identity as *Kanake* has been constructed by the writer Zaimoğlu. As "translator," "writer" and allied "fighter" he takes advantage of his power as "editor" and molds the interviews of his interlocutors into "works of art" (Skiba

187). The creation of his "Kanak Sprak" and the label *Kanake* associated with this language is Zaimoğlu's artificial construct.¹¹ Despite the fact that the texts are based on interviews whose recordings Zaimoğlu deleted, he creates fiction to suit the purpose of his self-representation. In his preface to *Kanak Sprak*, Zaimoğlu claims to have recorded the language of "authentic" German Turks (13-5), yet simultaneously makes clear that he manipulated the material for his "protocols:" "Kanak(a) Sprak" is no longer the language of real-life German Turks (Pfaff 220). The style in *Kanak Sprak* and *Koppstoff* seems, therefore, to be Zaimoğlu's rather than his interviewees' style and the question arises whether these books (as a form of self-staging) are more about himself than about the *Kanaken*. Zaimoğlu acts as a filter in *Kanak Sprak* and *Koppstoff*. He did let the *Kanaken/Kanaka* speak for themselves when he interviewed them, yet we are reading his and not his interlocutors' direct words. In that sense, Zaimoğlu offers consciously created "Nachdichtungen" (*Kanake Sprak* 15), since he wants to identify closely with both his male and his female interlocutors. His firm pretense of authenticity reveals his agenda: to be seen as a mouthpiece for young German Turks, beyond gender boundaries.

However, many interlocutors in Zaimoğlu's texts do not allow themselves to be labeled *Kanake*, and instead create their own, individual "labels."¹² Neologisms such as "Starkfrau" (Nesrin, 24, Rapperin und Street-Fighterin; *Koppstoff* 13) and "Kanak-Weib" (Aynur, 34, Künstlerin; *Koppstoff* 34) often include both a feminine and a strong component. These are individual "titles" and used like proper names which suggests a reaction against belonging to a group.¹³ The *Kanaka*'s linguistic innovations also point out their individual performances as young German Turkish women. In this context, one can refer to Butler when she asks: "What does it mean for a word not only to name, but also in some sense to perform and, in particular, to perform what it names" (*Excitable Speech* 43). The *Kanaka* probably do not consciously perform according to their own "labels," yet they certainly refer to themselves according to how they feel they act, and, in that sense, "perform what they name." Whatever "labels" they use, they put themselves in clear opposition to mainstream German women, whom they call, for example, "Sauertopf-Frauen," "deutsches Liebschen," and "diese Bundesfrauen" (Esra, 19, Abiturientin; *Koppstoff* 117, 119). By labeling themselves they assert their own power¹⁴, their newly-appropriated self-definition, in deliberate delimitation to other, non-*Kanake* women.

Zaimoğlu's interlocutors seem to be accustomed to being different: as Akay says, "Den Fremdländer kannst du nimmer aus der

Fresse wischen" (Akay, 29, vom Flohmarkt; *Kanak Sprak* 23). The parents of young German Turks came to Germany as "foreigners" – and usually remained in that position. Growing up in Germany, their children often tried to become "German," but then had to realize that the mainstream still regarded them as foreign. Zaimoğlu's protagonists have learned to accept this label as something that one has to deal with – and ultimately be proud of. On the basis of this new sense of belonging to difference, it seems that young German Turks negotiate a number of ways of looking for alternative spaces of belonging. Furthermore, there tends to exist a deep mistrust for anything German amongst children of former immigrants, which may be based on their parents' humiliating *Gastarbeiter*-history; hence they have no desire to be like Germans. As Büyükb Ibo puts it: "Den deutschen traust du nich übern weg, weil sie, die haben durchblick in ne andre richtung, und da willst du ums verrecken nich hin" (Büyükb Ibo, 18, Packer; *Kanak Sprak* 45). This attitude implies a reversal of old imperial patterns and a "repuzzling of history" as a means to "create security and new self-esteem" (Güngör/Loh 58).¹⁵ Mimicry – by which I mean the effort to integrate, to become like Germans as the state expects them to – occurs to a limited extent only and exclusively as a means to an end: Germany is only desirable as a dwelling place; its values are re-appropriated as deliberate difference and "otherness" by a generation that feels more consciously excluded than their parents. One of Zaimoğlu's interviewees, Hasan, for example, expresses this feeling:

Auch mit der familie und auch mit nem namen bleibst du ein bastard, du hast krause haare und benimmst dich nicht wie die deutschen, denen das licht längst ausgegangen is, du hast was vor, aber ne menge arschlöcher möchtest dich aus der gegend haben, und wenn du dich nicht wehrst, kappen sie dir die leitung und machen dich zur dunklen memme [...]. (Hasan, 13, Streuner und Schüler; *Kanak Sprak* 93)

For most of Zaimoğlu's interview partners, opposition to the *alemannen* becomes the determining factor in their self-positioning. Interestingly, the choice of word for the Germans derives from Turkish (*alman*) but is linguistically Germanized – another form of subversion. Zaimoğlu's interlocutors make clear linguistically who has the (linguistic) power; they have the advantage of being bi- or even multilingual (often in contrast to their parents) and are able to show disrespect for the

Germans who possibly do not understand the term "*alemannen*," or at least where it comes from. They seem to want to show their discontent with the way they are misjudged and underestimated in their social surroundings. The *Kanaken* make clear that they are part of Germany, but not in the sense of being assimilated: they define themselves by rejecting *Lieb-Aleins*, *Alemannen* and *Deutschländer*. This urge to find an exclusive space away from assimilation might also be the result of a general exclusion from Turkey where "Germanized" Turks are often referred to as *alamanca*, *Deutschländer*, a pejorative term for Turkish people who live in Germany and who, in the eyes of their family and friends in Turkey, have "Germanized" over the years and thus do not belong to Turkey any more.

Zaimoğlu's *Kanaken/Kanaka* constantly challenge "socially established ways of being" a "foreigner" or *Kanake* (cf. Culler 513):

Ein bastard ist ein bündel aus irrationalismen, er hat eine abseitige mystik, die ihn zutiefst beunruhigt, er sieht zeichen und wunder, wo keine sind, weil er sich stets auf fremden terrain bewegt. Man sagt dem bastard, er fühle sich unwohl, weil zwei seelen bzw. zwei kulturen in ihm wohnen. Das ist eine lüge. [...] Der bastard braucht keine politur, er verpaßt sich schon selbst mehrere schichten lack, damit er nicht auffällt wie ein gescheckter hund. Der kanake ist so etwas wie ein synthetisches produkt, das sich und die fabrik haßt, in dem es gefertigt wurde. ... er hat den blick für das, was sich hinter den kulissen abspielt. [...] Er ist darauf dressiert, zum kern vorzustößen, deshalb verschmätzt er die hülle. Also der kanake ist zugleich ein fundamentalist. (Memet, 29, Dichter; *Kanak Sprak* 110-1)

Memet's attitude implies a notion of choice, a play with gaps left behind by socially accepted roles and the reality of being a "foreigner." His use of the term "bastard" refers to *Kanaken* as in-between subjects and defines their marginality, which can be both a creative and restrictive position. It involves a constant struggle with identity. Yet this kind of identity-negotiation creates possibilities for resistance and change (Culler 514). As "social outsiders (in response to the significant growth of the Turkish middle class)," (Cheesman 184) the *Kanaken* react against assimilation. However, there often is an element of living up to exotic images involved in the interaction with the mainstream which can be

seen as a different kind of assimilation: "das gastarbeiterkind macht halt auf kulturkreissymptomatischen ethnoquark [...]: etwas nigger etwas harlem etwas oriental magic" (Zaimoğlu, "KümmelContra" 175). This "pick-and-mix" attitude of the child of the former *Gastarbeiter* is the initial reaction to the problematic of defining an identity under the pressure of the mainstream. It is only after a process of gaining self-consciousness that s/he becomes a *Kanake/Kanaka*. In whatever way they choose to represent themselves, they prove that their – in Butler's words – "reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed" (*Excitable Speech* 411).¹⁶

Part of the demonstration of opposition is the young German Turks' conscious living of their gang culture. Gangs or posses are a significant aspect in the process of defining identity for Zaimoğlu's male protagonists. Groups provide a sense of belonging, a sense of strength within the group, strength against others, and security in a hostile environment.

Gangs are part of a masculine world, a "gangsta culture."¹⁷ As Zaimoğlu indicates in his preface: "Am öffentlichen Leben in den Szenen der *Kanaken*-Ghettos nimmt hauptsächlich der Mann teil, der Frau dagegen wird bedeutet, sie habe sich aus der männlichen Welt herauszuhalten" (*Kanake Sprak* 15). Male exclusivity is expressed in terms of forming gender-specific groups and at the expense of women. Women, particularly Western women as well as prostitutes, are only regarded as "fair game," as an exchangeable trophy (Mennel 150), and are only passively part of the men's activities.¹⁸

This represents a return to gender stereotypes and the idea that (physical) fighting is exclusively masculine behavior, an attitude which is also represented by the constant reference to drugs, crime and violence: gangs operate in an "Unterwelt" (Kadir, 32, Soziologe; *Kanake Sprak* 100) where the struggle between power and law plays out (Foucault 87). Many of the *Kanaken* deliberately break any law as an expression of their identity and of a fight against "klein-ali-träume" (Faruk, 26, arbeitslos; *Kanake Sprak* 74), namely the dream of "making it in Germany" (which automatically means observing the law). However, this form of assimilation would mean submitting to the German mainstream – and ultimately becoming weak: "Die erste devise heißt: der hahn kräht nur nach dem starken" (Cem, 25, Zuhälter; *Kanake Sprak* 54). Living in the city demands the survival of the fittest which is personified by the *Kanakester* "as a new and effective strategy of survival" (Hestermann 364). However, bell hooks points out that the "role" of the aggressive, ethnically "different" young man is less a choice than is usually thought,

but rather a product of white male patriarchy (204). The question is whether the *Kanaken* follow the media image of the radical young Turk subconsciously or consciously recognize the street as the only place where they can become visible. The street is the place of struggle for Zaimoğlu's male characters, yet that does not mean that the image of the radical young Turk holds true for all German Turks.

The apparent instability of such an image leads to a perception as well as questioning of authenticity regarding what a *Kanake* or German person is: as the title of my article, which is derived from a title of a talk show on notions of Germanness, says, "Was deutsch ist, bestimmen wir" (39). The *Kanaken* do not allow themselves to be put into certain categories and have their own view on authenticity. They think that an "authentic" identity can only be acquired, or even earned, and it is based on a conscious and ultimately political decision to fight for it. Ulku, for example, maintains: "Ich kann dir man aufhören, was'n kanake echt sein läßt [...]" (Ulku, 28, arbeitslos; *Kanake Sprak* 136). "Echt" is based on non-acceptance of anything German that comes across as exclusive or assimilated. It is a social and political category. This authenticity is also connected to a codex, a certain kind of behavior and way of speaking as a separating device. It is also possibly connected to religious ideas of "good behavior," but certainly to culturally developed notions of honor. Honor is a concept frequently associated with Turkish, or more generally Muslim people: one's own and one's family's honor, which is often represented by the idea of (sexual) purity, needs to be protected, possibly also by means of violence. It becomes a defining and separating device re-appropriated by the *Kanaken* as a codex they all have to follow in order to remain part of the gang.

However, these acts of performance seem to be exhausting, and some of the characters develop a desire for peace: "[I]ch frag mich, wann ich das olle zähnefletschen endlich lassen kann, weil ich doch nicht aus'm tierreich bin, und meine ruhe haben will im menschenreich" (Faruk, 26, arbeitslos; *Koppstoff* 77). Faruk seems to suggest that he aims for a place among the mainstream: he wants to move up from being perceived as an animal to being respected as a human being.¹⁹ The *Kanaken/Kanaka* hope to achieve peace by finding out and defining who they are.

The notion of the margins of society also plays a vital role for these German Turkish men and women in the process of identity examination, particularly for the *Kanaka*. Some *Kanaka* are deliberately different, others try to superficially fit in by, for example, taking on "normal" jobs or speaking standard German, but almost all of them

"think marginally." This seems to be the result of their initial exclusion by the German mainstream.²⁰ The *Kanaka* largely perceive their diverse forms of "attack" as a countermovement and resistance to widely known pictures of Muslim women as oppressed and weak partners to men. They aim to rectify the picture of the crying, enduring and suffering Muslim woman, and express a new self-confidence and strength. The *Kanaka* seem to want to prove that they are as tough as men, which I see as one way of performing the role of a *Kanaka*. Their decision to "fight" seems, therefore, to be an even stronger and more conscious (and more necessary) one than that of the men.

The notion of toughness particularly comes to the fore in linguistic subversion: Zaimoğlu's *Kanaken* create their own linguistic spaces based on a mixture of German, slang, colloquialisms and other languages that results in a kind of *Rotwelsch* or code, and thus deliberately excludes those who do not understand it.²¹

For the *Kanaka*, language is *the* tool of fight. As the women's potential of resistance cannot be the group, verbal resistance seems to be their main weapon. For men, language serves as an additional tool of power, not a primary one. Language is also prominently part of the act of performing one's identity. Butler points out that "*speaking is itself a bodily act*"²² (*Excitable Speech* 10). Language is used to reach a particular aim: in the case of the *Kanaka* it clearly articulates anger and frustration, and provokes.

One of the most prominent features of the *Kanaka*'s language is the use of words that emphasize their toughness. The examples of "Starkfrau" (Nesrin, 24, Rapperin und Street-Fighterin; *Koppstoff* 13) and "Kanak-Weib" (Aynur, 34, Künstlerin; *Koppstoff* 34) show strong women and suggest an opposition to (at least linguistically) "weak" German Turkish men. However, I question whether this kind of use of strong words implies a form of weakness, a rebellion of the "voiceless." Do people (the German mainstream whom they address) actually listen? As I pointed out earlier, women are doubly marginalized. It seems, therefore, that, for many *Kanaka*, the high volume of their voices is the only effective way of speaking as a "Spivakian subaltern" as they cannot be ignored by raising their voices loud and clearly (Spivak 271-313).

Linguistic "toughness" is also expressed by the inventive use of language such as the creation of nouns. As a prominent feature of the German language (which also includes ignoring the capitalization of nouns in *Kanak Sprach*), this technique suggests a strong sense of fighting against the German mainstream by linguistically using German "weapons:" primarily pejorative words such as "Alemangeschichtsfick,"

"Insgesichtspucker," "Radieschenvonuntenreicher," "Alemanweitewelt" (Aynur, 34, Künstlerin; *Koppstoff* 32-4) reveal a conscious parody of the German use of compounds. This is the postcolonial technique of subverting one characteristic of the dominant group (the frequent use of compounds in the German language). By being overly creative with their invention of compounds and thus by re-appropriating a prominent feature of the German language, the *Kanaka* have found an effective tool of linguistic struggle: they can reclaim their pride and power, at least in linguistic terms.

The reclaiming of their linguistic power is also part of the *Kanaka*'s opposition to *Kanake*-men whom they often perceive as "zu soft" (introduction to Nesrin, 24, Rapperin und Street-Fighterin; *Koppstoff* 11). This is also symbolized by their use of Turkish. The use of their "mother tongue" demonstrates their linguistic power over men (12) as well as their discontent with the German mainstream. Turkish serves as a means of intentionally excluding men. The *Kanaka*'s origin is part and parcel of their expression of their discontent with the country they were born and live in (Germany), which points towards another creative interaction with their (here linguistic) origins and present. They demonstrate an "easy" (linguistic) transition from one culture to another (Dirim/Auer 22)²³, and show their cultural flexibility. In that respect, language also allows ambiguities: "Ich hielt sie zuerst für eine Deutsche und fluchte auf Türkisch über ihre mich anbellenden Hunde. In einem sehr gebrochenen Türkisch versuchte sie mich zu beruhigen" (introduction to Gül, 21, Anarchistin; *Koppstoff* 29). Despite cultural transformation processes among young German Turks, the interviewer Zaimoğlu, a native speaker of Turkish himself, seems to expect German Turks to speak perfect Turkish and is confused by Gül's broken Turkish. Yet being German Turkish does not automatically mean still being fluent in one's parents' native tongue. German is often much more part of their identity than Turkish is, to the extent that origins are lost or absorbed into an identity that gradually has become more German than Turkish.

Can these newly defined and created (literal and linguistic) spaces serve as a means of effective resistance to the mainstream? Zaimoğlu's *Kanaken/Kanaka* point out that they no longer can be perceived as *one* group such as children of former immigrants or "foreigners:" by differentiating themselves from the mainstream as well as within this group, they create spaces of belonging determined by a variety of factors. These processes appear as performative acts which lead to a deliberate construction of Turkish-Germanness.

Conclusion – Defining (Turkish-) Germanness

The regaining and proud emphasizing of German Turkishness/Turkish Germanness appear as a way of answering “a question of knowing who we are” (Foucault 78). The *Kanaken/Kanaka* negotiate ways of escaping from a fixed identity as “foreigner,” and do not accept – in Edward Said’s words – being “*first* an Oriental [or foreigner for that matter; F.M.], *second* a human being, and *last* again an Oriental”²⁴ (102).

Zaimoğlu clarifies: “ich will keine parallellwelt zum mainstream” (“KümmelContra” 176), and ultimately his characters contribute to a new understanding of (Turkish-)Germanness. The *Kanaken/Kanaka* aim for some sort of personal stability beyond notions of cultural in-betweenness. Yet as this security is not provided by the country in which they are “at home,” they need to define their own spaces of belonging, which are often based on the recognition of the fluidity and ever-changing construction of identity.

This endeavor is often embarked upon by reclaiming what they were denied by imperial practices of suppression. (Re-)Constructions of Turkish-Germanness primarily take place, therefore, via subversion processes. The *Kanaken/Kanaka* use the gaps in previously imposed identities as “foreigners” or children of *Gastarbeiter* as a form of resistance and change: they fight against the “Märchen von der Multikulturalität” and their “Opferrolle” (*Kanak Sprak* 11, 12). The result will be an alternative to “pure” ethnicities: Zaimoğlu wishes “[d]aß diese Kanaksterbewegung eine richtige Alternative wird zu all diesen Entgleisungen wie der Reethnisierung” (“Eure Coolness ist Gigaout” 30).

Overall, Zaimoğlu’s protagonists break the silence and resist oppression in multiple ways; they produce “*Mißtöne*” through their self-perceptions as Turkish Germans or German Turks, and thus articulate attitudes and opinions that the mainstream often does not want to hear. Their “disobedience,” which becomes part of the performative side of their Turkish-German identity, redefines power and demystifies ethnicity²⁵ away from repression and – on a wider level – possibly towards creativity. In this sense, the writer Zaimoğlu seems to know exactly how to “exploit” his own experiences of his (and his parents’) marginality that he has successfully shifted to the attention of the “center.” *Kanak Sprak* and *Koppstoff* were written about ten years ago, at a time when Zaimoğlu himself shook up the literary mainstream with the

creation of his “*Kanak Sprak*.” Nowadays, his impulse to “fight” has calmed down tremendously, or rather he “fights” in commercial terms by serving the public’s taste and the book industry: his latest novel *Leyla* (2006) portrays the history of Turkish immigration to Germany very traditionally and does not challenge stereotypes of *Gastarbeiter*. Zaimoğlu called his book “die Geschichte einer einfachen Frau aus dem Volke” in an interview with *Kulturzeit* in March 2006; his publisher Kiepenheuer & Witsch promotes his book in newspapers and magazines with the slogan “Eine Familiensaga aus dem Herzen des Orients.”²⁶ He effectively wrote a traditional narrative and left his previously favored innovative short prose and ‘protocols’ behind. Now we are reading about, for example, a violent father and his submissive daughter who marries an equally abusive husband and passively follows him to the “land of milk and honey,” Germany.

Zaimoğlu’s “*Mißtöne*” seem to be out of fashion. Or are they not necessary anymore? The latter is unlikely but the margins have largely been silenced again or have silenced themselves. One explanation could be that Zaimoğlu, the most prominent young German Turkish writers of the 1990s, has simply developed further: the *Kanaken*-generation, of which Zaimoğlu is part, has grown older and more settled, and seems to have become more interested in their origins. This is also reflected in Zaimoğlu’s public appearance: he transformed from a *Kanake* to an “intellectual” and has realized that the “grand monsieur” he is now performing, or the post-migrant intellectual, is a marketable figure, who catches the public’s attention in a less radical and thus possibly more serious manner. Zaimoğlu has grown out of being the representative of the *Kanaken*, the inventor of *Kanak Sprak*, and his personal battle cry “*Kanak Attak und Bastal*”²⁷ has made way for a monument to “die wahren Heldinnen der Einwanderung”²⁸ as portrayed in *Leyla*.

University of Edinburgh

Notes

- 1 "Was deutsch ist, bestimmen wir": Dokumentation der Talkshow 'III nach neun' (N3) mit Feridun Zaimoğlu, Heide Simonis, Wolf Biermann, Norbert Blüm und Harald Junker." *iz3p* (Februar-März 2000): 39.
- 2 This article was written as part of my PhD research, which is kindly supported by The Arts and Humanities Research Council. I am grateful to the Council for its support. Furthermore, I would like to thank Professor Sarah Colvin (University of Edinburgh) for her insightful reading of an earlier version of this article.
- 3 Cf. Zaimoğlu's organization *Kanak Attack* which was founded in 1998 as a "national network of anti-racist cultural political activists, accepting members of all backgrounds but dominated by migrants" (Cheesman 191).
- 4 See Ashcroft et al. The authors point out numerous subversion processes, primarily in terms of linguistics and literature. See also: "[I]t is only *within* the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible" (original emphasis) (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 185).
- 5 Cf. the public debate on German "Leitkultur" triggered by Friedrich Merz's (then chairman of the CDU in the *Bundestag*) comment on rules for immigration and integration in the newspaper *Die Welt* on 25 October 2000.
- 6 The exaggerated use of "ü," which is also a sound/letter in Turkish, appears as another linguistic subversion process that immediately draws attention to the (culturally) Turkish component of *Kanak Sprak*.
- 7 See Zaimoğlu, "sıcarım süppükürtünüze, züppele!" 86 (original emphasis): "Wenn es um Migranten geht, dann redet man gerne von *den* Türken oder *den* Schwarzen. Wenn es um einen selbst geht, dann erwartet man allerdings feine Differenzierungen. Und ganz besonders dann, wenn es sich um Subkulturen dreht. [...] *Dem* Türken geht der Sinn für die feinen Unterschiede ab. Subkultur sieht aus wie ein Bestandteil einer geschlossenen Gesellschaft. [...] *Der* Türke zeigt mit dem Finger und sagt: *die* Subkultur." – I often use the term "fight" in this article. In English, "struggle" would refer to what the *Kanaken/Kanaka* are doing, yet it is the word "fight" they themselves are using.
- 8 Cf. the entry "kanaka" in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.
- 9 Cf. the entry "Kanake" in *Wikipedia*.
- 10 The following discussion of the differences in meaning and connotation of the term "*Kanake*" is based on Güngör and Loh 27–40.
- 11 For a details analysis of authenticity in *Kanak Sprak* and Zaimoğlu's role as "editor" and fellow-*Kanake*, see Adelson 95–100.
- 12 Again, by using this term, I mean Zaimoğlu's female interviewees as a group, despite the fact that some of them strongly object to the term.
- 13 Butler also refers to the historicity of naming, "the movement of a history that it [the name] arrests" (*Exitable Speech* 36).
- 14 Cf. Butler, *Exitable Speech* 32: "power is understood on the model of the divine power of naming, where to utter is to create the effect uttered."
- 15 My translation of: "wir repuzzeln die geschichte" and "[A]ber nur die Beschäftigung mit diesem Wissen erzeugt Sicherheit und führt zu neuem Selbstbewusstsein."
- 16 Butler refers to "gender reality" here, but, as previously shown, for Zaimoğlu's characters this reality includes more than gender negotiation.
- 17 See hooks' examination of "gangsta culture" (15–32).

¹⁸ See the way Cem, 25, Zuhälter talks about "his" prostitutes in *Kanak Sprak* 49–54. See also the written conversations Serdar (on holiday in Turkey) and Hakan (in Germany) have in Zaimoğlu's *Liebesmale*. They tend to speak about women in a disparaging way. The number of their trophies, namely the number of the (German) women they have been able to seduce, is proof of their masculinity.

¹⁹ Interestingly, he applies old imperial vocabulary by referring to his animal-likeness, and so possibly suggests that he cannot completely escape from the influence of the mainstream. The latter becomes a projection area for his effective performance as *Kanake*.

²⁰ In the preface to *Koppstoff*, Zaimoğlu connects the content of his interviews to the racist attacks of the 1990s in Germany.

²¹ Standard Turkish does not play a significant role in the creation of the male "Kanak Sprak." Its words such as *alman* ("German" in Turkish) are Germanized into *almanne* rather than directly quoted from Turkish. For a linguistic analysis of *Kanak Sprak* see Yıldız 319–40. Yıldız focuses on the use of English, Turkish, German, North German vernacular, rap, *Ratzelach* and Jewish languages. She claims that Zaimoğlu "has created a distinctive style and language that is neither found on the streets, nor elsewhere in language" (320). She also draws attention to "fraternal relationships" and the "emphasis on masculinity" that is inherent in *Kanak Sprak* (325). See also, for example, Cheesman 183 on the untranslatability of *Kanak Sprak* (183), and on the inventive use of language in *Kanak Sprak* (184). Kein Nghi Ha takes a postcolonial standpoint and regards *Kanak Sprak* as a "unreine, kreolisierte Sprache" and points out the "Karnelisierung und Dezentrierung der herrschenden Herrensprache" (original emphasis) (165).

²² Original emphasis.

²³ "der Übergang vom Deutschen ins Türkische und umgekehrt erfolgt ohne großes Aufheben, ohne Markierungen, Pausen oder Verzögerungen. [...] Das Wechseln zwischen den Sprachen ist kein besonderes Ereignis in ihrem Leben; eher wäre dies schon monolinguales Sprechen."

²⁴ Original emphasis.

²⁵ See Ha 166: "Entstehung einer neuen entmystifizierten Ethnizität unter 'türkischen' MigrantInnen" (original emphasis).

²⁶ Advertisements for *Leyla* in various German newspapers.

²⁷ Kanak Attack's title of their *manifesto*.

²⁸ Zaimoğlu has mentioned this phrase in various interviews when talking about his novel *Leyla*, for example in an interview with *Kulturzeit* (March 2006).

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"Migrating Words": Emine Sevgi Özdamar's Approach to Gaining and Owning Language

Frauke Matthes

1. Introduction: Emine Sevgi Özdamar's Heteroglossia

"I live with language, in reality with both languages." (Özdamar in Horrocks and Kolinsky 50)

People's migrations not only involve the literal change of location and culture but also the initiation of negotiation processes in the migrant's identity. If the migrant is also a writer—an individual whose work is determined by language—these movements of cultural and linguistic exchange will become even more prominent. One way of approaching language, and simultaneously the most obvious movement in terms of language, is the act of translation—the transportation of items of one language and culture into another.

In the following, I will determine and compare processes of negotiation and translation in Emine Sevgi Özdamar's works *MutterZunge* (1990), *Das Leben ist eine Karavanserai* (1992) and *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* (1998).¹ As I understand these novels as literature of migration—whether within the country of origin, Turkey, or to a new country, Germany—notions of identity, which possibly include the appropriation of a new language as the language of expression, are constantly under consideration.² In this sense, Özdamar as a German migrant writer who deliberately decided to leave Turkey to live in Germany had to choose between German and Turkish as the language of her writing. Her decision in favour of German does not mean, however, that she has followed pressure to assimilate to a German "norm" of literature and thus left her mother tongue behind. On the contrary, she incorporates Turkish into her version of German—a German that is consciously influenced by other languages to produce its own character. The result of the interaction between German and Turkish, and, in addition, the examination of Arabic as linguistic and cultural influence on (Ottoman) Turkish can be

¹ Translations: *Mother Tongue*, Life Is a Caravanserai, *The Bridge of the Golden Horn*.

² The language question is raised in detail in Ashcroft et al., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* 7-8 and 38-77. In her article "Diasporic Identity in Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *MutterZunge*," Margaret Littler approaches the "un-German" nature of Özdamar's German, which is the result of her "representation of Turkish identity from the German diaspora," from a cultural studies perspective (220). She briefly compares Özdamar's German to the English of postcolonial writers with a similar hybrid background such as Salman Rushdie (221).

described as what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari refer to as the "deterritorialization of language" (18). They coined the term "littérature mince" ("minor literature") (16-27), which emphasizes, what Salman Rushdie calls, the "double perspective" of the migrant writer who is "at one and the same time insider [...] and outsider [...]" in the country of residence (19). This assumption also holds true in terms of language. As Özdamar said in an interview: "my own language is of course Turkish, but it is no longer the language of my day-to-day experience. In that sense, German is much more alive for me. [...] I live with language, in reality with both languages." (48, 50)

Özdamar is a genuinely heteroglossic writer. Her voice can be described as what Robert Young refers to as "double-voice" (23). This voice mediates between the (at least) two cultures that are available to her: the German and Turkish cultures. These cultures meet in a Bhabhaian "Third Space" where they mingle to emerge again as a hybrid conglomeration.³ However, according to Bhabha, hybridity "is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures [...] in a dialectical play of 'recognition'" ("Signs Taken for Wonders" 113-14). On the contrary, cultures interact—also through translation processes taking place between languages—which is not necessarily a harmonizing activity. However, Bhabha points out that these dialogic movements can result in a new kind of creativity, which in itself is subject to constant reinterpretations ("DissemiNation" 152-57). Thus temporality is one of the characteristics of the constant re-construction of (the hybrid's) identity, and, consequently, the migrant writer's work (Bhabha in Rutherford 211). Here Bhabha refers to Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the hybrid who "is not only double-voiced and double-accented [...]" but is also double-language" (Bakhtin 360). Bakhtin emphasises the dialogic interaction of the various sides of a migrant's identity and the heteroglossic nature of his/her linguistic existence (292).

Emine Sevgi Özdamar seems to personify Bakhtin's idea of the heteroglossic hybrid. Her work is centred on the exploration of the language of her writing (German), the language of her childhood and youth (Turkish) and the language of her Islamic heritage (Arabic), and the various encounters between those languages in the diverse environments of her life and work: Turkey and Germany. On this basis, she can offer linguistic "Third Spaces."

In *MutterZunge*, Özdamar's narrator describes her life as a German-Turkish writer in pre-unification Berlin. In the two stories "Mutter Zunge" and "Großvater Zunge," the search for the narrator's mother tongue, which she seems to have lost somewhere on her migrations within Turkey or later to Germany, appears as the determining factor of her life as a writer. In order to retrieve her mother tongue, the narrator decides to learn the language whose script determined the nature of Turkish until 1927, Arabic, in (West) Berlin. She wishes to (re-)create her identity

³ The notion of the "Third Space" is frequently discussed by Homi K. Bhabha in a number of his works listed in the bibliography.

based on her Ottoman (Arabic) past, which in itself was characterized by cultural and linguistic hybridity, and her German-Turkish present.

This interest in Arabic as the provider of history for (Ottoman) Turkish also plays a vital role in *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*. This novel describes the literal as well as metaphorical journey of the child-I-narrator who finds herself among diverse languages and cultures, Muslim as well as folk traditions and an outlook towards "the West" (Fischer and McGowan 17). The novel pays particular attention to Annette Wierschke's notion of language "as an expression of the 'foreign' and means of finding one's identity" (163),⁴ especially in relation to Arabic as part of the narrator's religious and cultural background.

The "foreignness of language" (Bhabha, "DissemiNation" 166) and the latter's appropriation, which is primarily based on linguistic and cultural translation processes, is represented in the use of the narrator's German in *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*.⁵ As Luise von Flotow points out, as a non-native speaker of German, Özdamar's narrator questions notions of linguistic competence and norm as well as cultural differences (69). Her translation processes make the interrelation between languages and cultures visible (cf. Benjamin 255), and according to Gayatri Spivak, "allow us to make sense of things, of ourselves." (177) If one sees "translation [...] as the most intimate act of reading" (Spivak 181) then the "reading" of cultures, which I understand as an openness to "the Other" as well as an openness to permitting change in "the self," is the essence of any translation process. Özdamar demonstrates this "reading of cultures" by combining the languages that surround her (Turkish, German and Arabic) and by creating a hybrid language—a "Third Language"—based on the "migration" of words. How does she endeavour this objective?

2. MutterZunge

The narrator of *MutterZunge* is a writer of Turkish origin living in Germany. Her naturally heteroglossic lifestyle abandons the idea of a pure language and defines language as a hybrid space instead. At the beginning of the text, she explains how her hybridity came into being and how this existence as an individual between (at least) two languages influences her perception of herself. She says:

In meiner Sprache heißt Zunge: Sprache.

Zunge hat keine Knochen, wohin man sie dreht, dreht sie sich dorthin.

Ich saß mit meiner gedrehten Zunge in dieser Stadt Berlin. (9; sec. "Mutter Zunge")⁶

⁴ My translation of: "Sprache [ist] gleichzeitig Ausdruck von Fremdheit und Mittel zur Identitätsfindung".

⁵ Litter also discusses the "foreignness of language" in relation to *MutterZunge* and its ability to challenge notions of homogeneity in German culture (220-25).

⁶ Trans.: "In my language, 'tongue' means 'language'.

A tongue has no bones: twist it in any direction and it will turn that way.

The narrator plays with the ambiguity resulting out of the literal translation of the Turkish word "dil" into the German word "Zunge" (tongue, i.e. the part of her body) instead of the, in this context, correct German equivalent "Sprache" (language). I read this (mis-)translation as her way of transforming the difficulty of living in a foreign language into the realization of her heteroglossia (cf. Jitler). Seyhan points out that "Zunge drehen" (twisting the tongue) is a literal translation of the Turkish idiom *dili dönmek*, [which is] often used in the negative as *dilim dönmüyor* (I cannot say or pronounce) ("Geographies of Memory" 204). Seyhan seems to suggest that the narrator is lost linguistically in Germany. However, I argue that the deliberate use of the supposedly wrong meaning of "dil" ("tongue") draws attention to her culturally and linguistically ever-changing "Third Space" where she can negotiate her hybrid identity. In the course of the stories, Özdamar's narrator learns—yet not without difficulties—how to put herself in the position of the gaining person of the "Third Space" and is, therefore, able to play with the ambiguities provided by the movements—translations—between the different languages available to her.

The process of gaining insights into languages and cultures, and consequently into one's identity through ambiguities caused by translation, is demonstrated by the narrator's examination of Arabic in relation to Turkish, which entails an examination of herself as a hybrid individual. She thereby finds differences as well as similarities, but it seems that the former rather than the latter provide explanations for the hybrid nature of her identity:

Ich suchte arabische Wörter, die es noch in türkischer Sprache gibt. Ich fragte
Ibni Abdullah [the Arabic teacher]: "Kennst du sie?"

Leb – Mund
Ducar – Befallen
Maç – Vergangenheit
[...]
Yetim – Waise

"Ja", sagte [sic] Ibni Abdullah, "es hört sich ein klein bißchen anders an." (29;
see, "Großvater Zunge"; emphasis in original)⁷

I sat with my twisted tongue in this city, Berlin." (9; see, "Mother Tongue")
Trans.: "I looked for Arabic words, that [sic] are still in the Turkish language. I asked Ibni
Abdullah [the Arabic teacher]: [sic] 'Do you know them?'

Leb – mouth
Ducar – befall
Maç – past
[...]
Yetim – orphan
'Yes,' said Ibni Abdullah, 'that sounds a bit like it.'" (34; see, "Grandfather Tongue";
emphasis in original)

The search for Turkish words of Arabic origin enables the narrator to establish a space where not only her Ottoman past and her German-Turkish present meet in linguistic terms, but also where her identity as a Turkish writer with Arabic (Ottoman) roots who lives in the religiously and culturally different environment of Germany lies. She embraces the changing nature of the various sides of her identity, which she associates with the migration of Arabic words into Turkish and the linguistic gaps left behind by differences in phonology and pronunciation (Jitler 228), and learns to transform them into the creative potential for her life and work. This is her way of finding a migrant writer's identity situated in a constantly re-negotiated "Third Space."

3. *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*

In this novel, the process of the young narrator's identification on her family's migrations within Turkey is also explored in terms of language. Language gives access to religion and other parts of the Muslim world, mainly in the form of prayers spoken in Arabic or stories that refer to the Islamic heritage of Turkey. However, this "Arabic" knowledge remains unconsciously internalized, and raises the question whether its literal non-comprehension has effects on the protagonist's perception of the linguistic (and religious) side of her life.

For example: the narrator utters customary expressions such as *Maşallah* ("whatever God wishes") and *Inşallah* ("God willing") as part of rituals rather than out of her desire to refer to God. The phrase *Bismillâhrahmanirrahim* ("in the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful") in particular plays a vital role in her daily routine:

Großmutter sprach diese arabischen Wörter, die wie eine Kamelkarawane
hintereinander liefen, in meine Augen guckend, in ihrem Kapadokia-
Dorfdialekt. Die Kamelkarawane sammelte sich in meinem Mund, ich sprach
die Gebete mit Großmutter, so hatten wir zwei Kamelkarawanen, ihre Kamele,
die größer waren als meine, nahmen meine vor ihre Beine und brachten meinen
Kamelen das Laufen bei. Beim Sitzen wackelten wir auch wie Kamele, und ich
sprach:
"Bismillâhrahmanirrahim"

[...]

Amin.

Ich wußte nicht, was diese Wörter sagten, vielleicht Großmutter Ayşe auch
nicht. Das Wort Bismillâhrahmanirrahim kam aus den Mündern von vielen
Menschen. (55-56; emphasis in original)⁸

⁸ Trans.: "Looking into my eyes and speaking her Kapadokia village dialect, Grandmother spoke Arabic words that followed each other like a caravan of camels. The caravan of camels collected in my mouth, I spoke the prayers with Grandmother, and so we had two caravans of camels, her camels which were larger than mine, placed them in front, and taught my camels to walk. Sitting there, we swayed like camels too, and I said, 'Bismillâhrahmanirrahim'

The narrator's translations of the Arabic words into pictures (a caravan of camels) represent only one way of "comprehending" the words. They become real and physical: her grandmother's bigger camels (her spoken Arabic words) teach her granddaughter's camels how to walk (how to pronounce the Arabic words). Thus the Arabic language becomes more graspable for the narrator. Her translation processes enable her to find access to Arabic and—even if in a mediated way—to her religion in the form of the customary practice of praying. This kind of dealing with language becomes another moment of creating a "Third Space" where the different aspects of the narrator's cultural identity interact to contribute towards her migrant identity.

This interactive use of the languages that surround the narrator emphasizes her fluid movements between languages and cultures. This notion is also represented in relation to other languages such as English. By playing with ambiguities that arise out of translation processes, the narrator undermines notions of linguistic competence and challenges cultural differences (von Jotow 69), as the following example demonstrates:

Der Alte hatte zu seinem Ding gesagt:
Die Ware – Hab und Gut. [...] Mein Vater sagte dazu ein anderes Wort: cük. [...] Es gab noch viele Namen für die Ware und Cük.
Malafat. [...]
Pantolonbalığı (Hosenfisch). [...]
Incir dolması (gefüllte Feige). [...]
[...]
Der echte Name von Schwanz war Sik. Den benutzten die Leute, wenn sie schimpfen. Im Wörterbuch stand er als Sik, aber neben ihm stand eine Notiz: "sehr peinlich." Meine Mutter sagte zu mir auch sehr oft, wenn ich zuviel redete: "Fick nicht meine Ohren" (Kulagımı sikme). [...]
Einmal, in der Schule im Englischunterricht, mußte ein Mädchen einen englischen Satz lesen: "I am sick." Sie sagte: "I am si." [...]
Das Mädchen sagte nicht sik, die Lehrerin gab ihr eine große Null und sagte zu ihr: "Was schämst du dich denn, es gibt irgendwie sik bei euren Vätern und Brüdern." (177–78)⁹

[...] Amin.
I didn't know what these words meant, maybe grandmother Ayşe didn't know either. But the word bismillahirrahmanirrahim came from the mouths of many people." (37–38)
⁹ Trans.: "The old man had called his dick the goods – the property. [...] My father used a different word, he said cük. [...] There were a lot of other words for the goods and cük.
Malafat. [...]
Pantolonbalığı (Trousers fish). [...]
Incir dolması (stuffed figs). [...]
[...]

The girl literally does not want to pronounce the word "sick" as it carries a different meaning for her in her mother tongue. Seyhan reads this moment as a form of involuntary "code switching" which "happens when a speaker switches languages midstream" (*Writing Outside the Nation* 109). However, by including this comical scene in her novel, Özdamar "detritorializes" language: she makes her readers aware of ambiguities in languages and cultures by taking the English word with its neutral meaning out of its context and by transplanting it into the differently defined context of the Turkish language. The word acquires a different—here sexually explicit—meaning. The ambiguity of the word "sik" is, therefore, the result of linguistic as well as cultural translation processes and the girl's subsequent decision to use the less appropriate meaning due to her partly culturally acquired, partly expected shyness, which is not appropriate in the environment of the English classroom. The narrator demonstrates that literal as well as linguistic migration processes initiate the constant shifting of meanings, which she—as a migrant—seems to personify.

4. Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn

The shift of meanings as the result of migratory processes is also explored in *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*. Here similar (non-)translation processes occur. Having arrived in Germany as a *Gastarbeiterin* (guest worker), the narrator describes wide linguistic as well as cultural gaps between the experiences she had in Turkey, and her understanding of her new environment, primarily her work environment (the factory). She initially tries to bridge those gaps by simply repeating what she hears, yet without actually knowing what the meaning of what she repeats is. It is therefore already at the beginning of the novel that the narrator creates a "Third Language" based on pure listening. As the narrator explains: "Ich konnte kein Wort Deutsch und lernte die Sätze, so wie man, ohne Englisch zu sprechen, 'I can't get no satisfaction' singt. Wie ein Hähnchen, das Gak gak gak macht." (11)¹⁰ In this sense, her use of German is very similar to the young narrator's use of Arabic in *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*. The "blind" mimicry of words that are not fully comprehended and the emphasis on sound rather than meaning often creates, on the one hand, a comic, and, on the other hand, a critical effect. For example, the narrator also learns German by memorizing the headlines of newspapers:

The real word for prick was sik. People used that when they were angry. In the dictionary it also said sik, but the note next to it said 'very embarrassing.' If I talked too much, my mother would often say, 'Don't fuck my ears' (Kulagımı sikme). [...]
Once in English class in school a girl had to read an English sentence, 'I am sick.' She said, 'I am si.' [...]
The girl wouldn't say sik. The teacher gave her a zero and said, 'What are you ashamed of, there are kilos of siks around, your brothers your fathers.' (135–36)
¹⁰ Trans.: "I didn't know a word of German and learnt the phrases just as one sings along to 'I can't get no satisfaction' despite not speaking any English. Like a hen, who cluck, cluck, clucks."

Ich lernte die verschiedenen Dialekte und übte, während ich Radiolampen zusammenbaute oder auf dem langen Woyaymkorridor lief, so wie ich auch die Sätze aus den deutschen Schlagzeilen übte: WAR DAS EIN STURM, HAUTJUCKEN? DDT HILFT [...] (51)¹¹

By perceiving German via news headlines, the narrator (involuntarily) makes the readers aware of the political situation in the mid-1960s in Germany, and takes the critical and, to a certain extent, advantageous position of a cultural outsider. This is an example for the critical power of mimicry, which unconsciously determines the narrator's approach to her environment. According to Bhabha, "mimicry repeats rather than *re-presents*" ("Of Mimicry and Man" 88; emphasis in original), as the narrator—initially because she does not know what else to do in order to learn German—does. She partly imitates words as actions in an Aristotelian sense of mimesis: she creates the reality of the repeated words anew, they come into existence again through the act of repetition (von Wilpert 574). The narrator employs the means available to her, namely her ability to "stage words" (Konuk, "Identitätssuche" 69) (she becomes an actor later in her life, after all).¹² However, her act of repeating words demonstrates "the strategic failure" (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man" 86) of the German authority in relation to the narrator as guest worker, the—in opposition to the Germans—subordinate woman. Although the narrator and her fellow guest workers can only assimilate to a certain extent—they are "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man" 86) as their German does not follow the norm—, their use of language puts them in a position to disrupt the Germans' authority (cf. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man" 88). They demonstrate their subversive power in the form of linguistic hybridity by speaking a supposedly wrong German and by observing and subsequently mimicking their environment in an allegedly naïve way. Özdamar certainly plays with this ambivalence suggested by Bhabha: the guest workers live between their home and foreign cultures and languages, and can develop the "double vision" of the migrant (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man" 88).

As there are obvious limits in the narrator's use of German, the notion of the "Third Language" seems to function as a solution of her occasional inability to speak German properly. She notices: "aber die Wörter reichten nicht aus" (135).¹³ In addition, she makes the reader aware of the fact that there are many "Germans" that derive from the native speakers who teach the guest workers. For example: "Hamza übersetzte das Lied in *das* Deutsch, das er von seiner Lehrerin gelernt

¹¹ Trans.: "I learnt the various dialects and practised while assembling radio lamps or hurrying down the long corridor in the hhostel, just as I repeated phrases from the German headlines: WAS IT A STORM, GOOSEBUMPS? DDT HELPS [...]"

¹² My translation of: "Inszenierung von Wörtern". This aspect is also discussed in detail by Littler 225–27.

¹³ Trans.: "yet the words did not suffice."

hatte" (49, my emphasis).¹⁴ In this sense, Standard German does not exist, but instead there is a diversity of "Third Languages" that depend on the influence of the native speakers' German on the Turkish guest workers' developing German, and the latter's mix with Turkish.

These "Third Languages" clearly demonstrate the changing nature of language—as a developing language such as the guest workers' German that heavily depends on their surroundings, or, in relation to a language's past, Turkish's Ottoman heritage. In *MutterZunge*, the narrator describes this phenomenon as "migrating words". Not only is the way they are pronounced changed on their journey while interacting with other languages and being transformed by culturally different speakers, but also their meanings are adapted according to the arrival language's speakers' linguistic needs which are defined by both their cultural heritage and their present situation. The narrator observes: "Bis diese Wörter aus deinem Land aufgestanden und zu meinem Land gelaufen sind, haben sie sich unterwegs etwas geändert." (29; sec. "Großvater Zunge")¹⁵ As the narrator alertly watches and describes the nature of both Turkish and Arabic, she discovers a hybrid space in time where these languages meet. This space, whose dialogic nature rejects questions of linguistic competence and correctness, also provides the basis for the "detritorialization of language," the shift of language from one cultural context to another—from an Arabic (Ottoman) to a Turkish and from a Turkish to a German context, and its re-interpretation according to ever-changing contexts of migration.

5. Conclusion: Özdamar's Linguistic Home in Migration

According to Wierschke, Özdamar's narrators "[question] socio-cultural conventions [and] notions of linguistic competence" (18).¹⁶ This appropriation of language can be regarded as an "act of resistance" (Boa 126)¹⁷ and consequently as a form of power of the writer over her readers. The latter are not provided with any explanations regarding the unusual use of language and—as a multicultural and multilingual audience—become part of the subversion process instead. By challenging cultural and linguistic differences, Özdamar's narrators offer new and multiple views on their immediate environment (Germany) and its language, as well as on their Ottoman-Turkish (Arabic) heritage. This act gives access to language as a "place of ambivalence and of the inauthentic" (Konuk,

¹⁴ Trans.: "Hamza translated the song into the *version* of German that he had learnt from his teacher" (my emphasis).

¹⁵ Trans.: "y elim – orphan

'Yes,' said İbni Abdullah, 'that sounds a bit like it.'

¹⁶ I said: 'When these words rose and travelled from your country to my country, they were somewhat changed on the way.' (34; sec. "Grandfather Tongue"; emphasis in original)

¹⁷ My translation of: "[Hinterfragen] sozio-kulturelle[r] Konventionen, Begriffe linguistischer Kompetenz".

¹⁸ My translation of: "Akt des Widerstandes."

"Identitätssuche" 69)¹⁸ where meanings are constantly re-defined. Wierschke also mentions that it is a place of tension and friction that contributes to a "synthesis between [...] [German and Turkish] which is not easy to understand by native speakers of either language but only by people who live in both languages and cultures" (189).¹⁹ Hence Özdamar's narrators create an unusual synthesis of both languages and even embrace a further language, Arabic. Their identity emerges from within this space of heteroglossia. In this sense, not only does Özdamar demonstrate the literal migration of her narrators, she also describes their "migration[s] on a stylistic level" (Konuk, "Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei" 150).²⁰ As the narrator in *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* describes herself and her fellow guest workers: "Wir waren wie die Vögel, die irgendwohin flogen und ab und zu auf die Erde herunterkamen, um dann weiter zu fliegen." (40)²¹ Özdamar's narrators do not have a fixed "linguistic home," but create their own versions of linguistic "homes on the move."

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- ¹⁸ My translation of: "Ort der Ambivalenz", "Sprache als Ort des Inauthentischen".
- ¹⁹ My translation of: "Synthese beider Sprachen, die weder für Muttersprachler der einen noch der anderen Sprache problemlos zu verstehen ist, sondern nur von Menschen, die zwischen beiden Sprachen und Kulturen leben".
- ²⁰ My translation of: "Migration auf stilistischer Ebene".
- ²¹ Trans.: "We were like birds migrating somewhere, who every so often came down to earth, only to take off once again."

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Not to Get Lost in Translation: What Texts of German Literature Written by Authors of Turkish Origin May Teach Us About Migration and Integration

Veronica Bernard

Introduction

The key term in discussing aspects of migration is intercultural communication. Intercultural communication involves people from one culture in a process of re-evaluating their views on a culture different from their own, and by this reaching a better way of understanding.

Regarding this context as being relevant, and being aware of the fact that the literary texts analysed have three aspects in common which are part of the results you get, namely, the reflection by an author's intellectual mind, the selection by a public's cultural view from the outside, and questioning scholar's cultural view from the outside, this article presents the results of an analysis of the migrant character's perspectives in texts written by Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Selim Özdoğan, Yüksel Pazarkaya, Salih Scheinhardt, Zafer Senocak, Alev Tekinay, Feridun Zaimoglu, and in Fatih Akin's film *Gegen die Wand* concerning the following issues:

- patterns of how a dominant culture is seen from outside (i.e. by migrants)
- how migrants see their own cultures and how they want you to see them
- how they experience their ghetto-situation resulting from cultural isolation, language problems and strange surroundings
- patterns of „not discussing“ what is experienced as aspects of cultural difference
- patterns of intercultural communication gaps resulting from this.

Patterns of how a dominant culture is seen from the outside

The relevant patterns are creating myths back home which turn into stereotypes, sticking to those stereotypes after having migrated, being re-assured about the negative stereotypes by negative experience, being disillusioned about the positive ones by negative experience, and creating additional stereotypes by generalization of negative experience after having stayed in Germany for some time.

Reading the texts you learn that myths about Germany and its population root in rumours about a better, nevertheless, somehow strange, far-away place where poor people have gone to and have returned with their pockets full of money. They are the sources of cultural and national stereotypes. And although there are both negative and positive stereotypes, the positive ones are much